THE

WORKS

OF

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

LORD BYRON,

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IN FIVE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

THE CORSAIR—LARA.

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CONTENTS

TO

VOLUME III.

	Page
The CORSAIR	3
Canto I.	9
Canto II.	47
Canto III.	83
Notes to the Corsair	127
LARA	139
Canto I.	141
Canto II.	181
Note to Lara	219

THE CORSAIR;

A TALE.

"——— I suoi pensieri in lui dormir non ponno."
TASSO, *Canto decimo, Gerusalemme Liberata.*

TO

THOMAS MOORE, ESQ.

MY DEAR MOORE,

I DEDICATE to you the last production with which I shall trespass on public patience, and your indulgence, for some years; and I own that I feel anxious to avail myself of this latest and only opportunity of adorning my pages with a name, consecrated by unshaken public principle, and the most undoubted and various talents. While Ireland ranks you among the firmest of her patriots; while you stand alone the first of her bards in her estimation, and Britain repeats and ratifies the decree, permit one, whose only regret, since our first acquaintance, has been the years he had lost before it commenced, to add the humble, but sincere suffrage of friend-

ship, to the voice of more than one nation. It will at least prove to you, that I have neither forgotten the gratification derived from your society, nor abandoned the prospect of its renewal, whenever your leisure or inclination allows you to atone to your friends for too long an absence. It is said among those friends, I trust truly, that you are engaged in the composition of a poem whose scene will be laid in the East; none can do those scenes so much justice. The wrongs of your own country the magnificent and fiery spirit of her sons, the beauty and feeling of her daughters, may there be found; and Collins, when he denominated his Oriental his Irish Eclogues, was not aware how true, at least, was a part of his parallel. Your imagination will create a warmer sun, and less clouded sky; but wildness, tenderness, and originality are part of your national claim of oriental descent, to which you have already thus far proved your title more

clearly than the most zealous of your country's antiquarians.

May I add a few words on a subject on which all men are supposed to be fluent, and none agreeable?—Self. I have written much, and published more than enough to demand a longer silence than I now meditate; but for some years to come it is my intention to tempt no further the award of "Gods, men, nor columns." In the present composition I have attempted not the most difficult, but, perhaps, the best adapted measure to our language, the good old and now neglected heroic couplet. The stanza of Spenser is perhaps too slow and dignified for narrative; though, I confess, it is the measure most after my own heart: Scott alone, of the present generation, has hitherto completely triumphed over the fatal facility of the octo-syllabic verse; and this is not the least victory of his fertile and mighty

genius: in blank verse, Milton, Thomson, and our dramatists, are the beacons that shine along the deep, but warn us from the rough and barren rock on which they are kindled. The heroic couplet is not the most popular measure certainly; but as I did not deviate into the other from a wish to flatter what is called public opinion, I shall quit it without further apology, and take my chance once more with that versification, in which I have hitherto published nothing but compositions whose former circulation is part of my present and will be of my future regret.

With regard to my story, and stories in general, I should have been glad to have rendered my personages more perfect and amiable, if possible, inasmuch as I have been sometimes criticised, and considered no less responsible for their deeds and qualities than if all had been personal. Be it so—if I

have deviated into the gloomy vanity of "drawing from self," the pictures are probably like, since they are unfavourable; and if not, those who know me are undeceived, and those who do not, I have little interest in undeceiving. I have no particular desire that any but my acquaintance should think the author better than the beings of his imagining; but I cannot help a little surprise, and perhaps amusement, at some odd critical exceptions in the present instance, when I see several bards (far more deserving, I allow) in very reputable plight, and quite exempted from all participation in the faults of those heroes, who, nevertheless, might be found with little more morality than "The Giaour," and perhaps—but no—I must admit Childe Harold to be a very repulsive personage; and as to his identity, those who like it must give him whatever "alias" they please.

If, however, it were worth while to remove the impression, it might be of some service to me, that the man who is alike the delight of his readers and his friends, the poet of all circles, and the idol of his own, permits me here and elsewhere to subscribe myself,

most truly,

and affectionately,

his obedient servant,

BYRON.

January 2, 1814.

THE CORSAIR;

A TALE.

CANTO I.

" ——— nessun maggior dolore,
" Che ricordarsi del tempo felice
" Nella miseria, ———."

DANTE.

I.

"O'ER the glad waters of the dark blue sea,
" Our thoughts as boundless, and our souls as free,
" Far as the breeze can bear, the billows foam,
" Survey our empire and behold our home!
" These are our realms, no limits to their sway—
" Our flag the sceptre all who meet obey.
" Ours the wild life in tumult still to range
" From toil to rest, and joy in every change.

"Oh, who can tell? not thou, luxurious slave!
"Whose soul would sicken o'er the heaving wave;
"Not thou, vain lord of wantonness and ease!
"Whom slumber soothes not—pleasure cannot please—
"Oh, who can tell, save he whose heart hath tried,
"And danced in triumph o'er the waters wide,
"The exulting sense—the pulse's maddening play,
"That thrills the wanderer of that trackless way?
"That for itself can woo the approaching fight,
"And turn what some deem danger to delight;
"That seeks what cravens shun with more than zeal,
"And where the feebler faint—can only feel—
"Feel—to the rising bosom's inmost core,
"Its hope awaken and its spirit soar?
"No dread of death—if with us die our foes—
"Save that it seems even duller than repose:
"Come when it will—we snatch the life of life—
"When lost—what recks it—by disease or strife?

" Let him who crawls enamoured of decay,
" Cling to his couch, and sicken years away;
" Heave his thick breath; and shake his palsied head;
" Ours—the fresh turf, and not the feverish bed.
" While gasp by gasp he faulters forth his soul,
" Ours with one pang—one bound—escapes controul.
" His corse may boast it's urn and narrow cave,
" And they who loathed his life may gild his grave:
" Ours are the tears, though few, sincerely shed,
" When Ocean shrouds and sepulchres our dead.
" For us, even banquets fond regret supply
" In the red cup that crowns our memory;
" And the brief epitaph in danger's day,
" When those who win at length divide the prey,
" And cry, Remembrance saddening o'er each brow,
" How had the brave who fell exulted *now!*"

II.

Such were the notes that from the Pirate's isle,
Around the kindling watch-fire rang the while;

Such were the sounds that thrilled the rocks along,
And unto ears as rugged seemed a song!
In scattered groups upon the golden sand,
They game—carouse—converse—or whet the brand;
Select the arms—to each his blade assign,
And careless eye the blood that dims its shine:
Repair the boat, replace the helm or oar,
While others straggling muse along the shore;
For the wild bird the busy springes set,
Or spread beneath the sun the dripping net;
Gaze where some distant sail a speck supplies,
With all the thirsting eye of Enterprize;
Tell o'er the tales of many a night of toil,
And marvel where they next shall seize a spoil:
No matter where—their chief's allotment this;
Theirs, to believe no prey nor plan amiss.
But who that CHIEF? his name on every shore
Is famed and feared—they ask and know no more.

With these he mingles not but to command;
Few are his words, but keen his eye and hand.
Ne'er seasons he with mirth their jovial mess,
But they forgive his silence for success.
Ne'er for his lip the purpling cup they fill,
That goblet passes him untasted still—
And for his fare—the rudest of his crew
Would that, in turn, have passed untasted too;
Earth's coarsest bread, the garden's homeliest roots,
And scarce the summer luxury of fruits,
His short repast in humbleness supply
With all a hermit's board would scarce deny.
But while he shuns the grosser joys of sense,
His mind seems nourished by that abstinence.
"Steer to that shore!"—they sail. "Do this!"—
'tis done:
"Now form and follow me!"—the spoil is won.
Thus prompt his accents and his actions still,
And all obey and few enquire his will;

To such, brief answer and contemptuous eye
Convey reproof, nor further deign reply.

III.

"A sail!—a sail!"—a promised prize to Hope!
Her nation—flag—how speaks the telescope?
No prize, alas!—but yet a welcome sail:
The blood-red signal glitters in the gale.
Yes—she is ours—a home returning bark—
Blow fair, thou breeze!—she anchors ere the dark.
Already doubled is the cape—our bay
Receives that prow which proudly spurns the spray.
How gloriously her gallant course she goes! 91
Her white wings flying—never from her foes—
She walks the waters like a thing of life,
And seems to dare the elements to strife.
Who would not brave the battle-fire—the wreck—
To move the monarch of her peopled deck?

IV.

Hoarse o'er her side the rustling cable rings;
The sails are furled; and anchoring round she swings:
And gathering loiterers on the land discern
Her boat descending from the latticed stern.
'Tis manned—the oars keep concert to the strand,
Till grates her keel upon the shallow sand.
Hail to the welcome shout!—the friendly speech!
When hand grasps hand uniting on the beach;
The smile, the question, and the quick reply,
And the heart's promise of festivity!

V.

The tidings spread, and gathering grows the crowd:
The hum of voices, and the laughter loud,
And woman's gentler anxious tone is heard—
Friends'—husbands'—lovers' names in each dear word:

" Oh! are they safe? we ask not of success—
" But shall we see them? will their accents bless?
" From where the battle roars—the billows chafe—
" They doubtless boldly did—but who are safe?
" Here let them haste to gladden and surprize,
" And kiss the doubt from these delighted eyes!"—

VI.

" Where is our chief? for him we bear report—
" And doubt that joy—which hails our coming—short;
" Yet thus sincere—'tis cheering, though so brief;
" But, Juan! instant guide us to our chief:
" Our greeting paid, we'll feast on our return,
" And all shall hear what each may wish to learn."
Ascending slowly by the rock-hewn way,
To where his watch-tower beetles o'er the bay,
By bushy brake, and wild flowers blossoming,
And freshness breathing from each silver spring,

Whose scattered streams from granite basins burst,
Leap into life, and sparkling woo your thirst;
From crag to cliff they mount—Near yonder cave,
What lonely straggler looks along the wave?
In pensive posture leaning on the brand,
Not oft a resting-staff to that red hand?
" 'Tis he—'tis Conrad—here—as wont—alone;
" On—Juan! on—and make our purpose known.
" The bark he views—and tell him we would greet
" His ear with tidings he must quickly meet:
" We dare not yet approach—thou know'st his mood,
" When strange or uninvited steps intrude."

VII.

Him Juan sought, and told of their intent—
He spake not—but a sign expressed assent.
These Juan calls—they come—to their salute
He bends him slightly, but his lips are mute.

"These letters, Chief, are from the Greek—the spy,
"Who still proclaims our spoil or peril nigh:
"Whate'er his tidings, we can well report,
"Much that"—"Peace, peace!"—He cuts their
prating short.
Wondering they turn, abashed, while each to each
Conjecture whispers in his muttering speech:
They watch his glance with many a stealing look,
To gather how that eye the tidings took;
But, this as if he guessed, with head aside,
Perchance from some emotion, doubt, or pride,
He read the scroll—"My tablets, Juan, hark—
"Where is Gonsalvo?"
"In the anchored bark."
"There let him stay—to him this order bear.
"Back to your duty—for my course prepare:
"Myself this enterprize to-night will share."

"To-night, Lord Conrad?"
"Ay! at set of sun:
"The breeze will freshen when the day is done.
"My corslet—cloak—one hour—and we are gone.
"Sling on thy bugle—see that free from rust,
"My carbine-lock springs worthy of my trust;
"Be the edge sharpened of my boarding-brand,
"And give it's guard more room to fit my hand.
"This let the Armourer with speed dispose;
"Last time, it more fatigued my arm than foes:
"Mark that the signal-gun be duly fired,
"To tell us when the hour of stay's expired."

VIII.

They make obeisance, and retire in haste,
Too soon to seek again the watery waste:
Yet they repine not—so that Conrad guides,
And who dare question aught that he decides?

That man of loneliness and mystery,
Scarce seen to smile, and seldom heard to sigh;
Whose name appals the fiercest of his crew,
And tints each swarthy cheek with sallower hue;
Still sways their souls with that commanding art
That dazzles, leads, yet chills the vulgar heart.
What is that spell, that thus his lawless train
Confess and envy, yet oppose in vain?
What should it be? that thus their faith can bind?
The power of Thought—the magic of the Mind!
Linked with success, assumed and kept with skill,
That moulds another's weakness to it's will;
Wields with their hands, but, still to these unknown,
Makes even their mightiest deeds appear his own.
Such hath it been—shall be—beneath the sun
The many still must labour for the one!
'Tis Nature's doom—but let the wretch who toils,
Accuse not, hate not *him* who wears the spoils.

Oh! if he knew the weight of splendid chains,
How light the balance of his humbler pains!

IX.

Unlike the heroes of each ancient race,
Demons in act, but Gods at least in face,
In Conrad's form seems little to admire,
Though his dark eye-brow shades a glance of fire:
Robust but not Herculean—to the sight
No giant frame sets forth his common height;
Yet, in the whole, who paused to look again,
Saw more than marks the crowd of vulgar men;
They gaze and marvel how—and still confess
That thus it is, but why they cannot guess.
Sun-burnt his cheek, his forehead high and pale
The sable curls in wild profusion veil;
And oft perforce his rising lip reveals
The haughtier thought it curbs, but scarce conceals.

Though smooth his voice, and calm his general mien,
Still seems there something he would not have seen:
His features' deepening lines and varying hue
At times attracted, yet perplexed the view,
As if within that murkiness of mind
Worked feelings fearful, and yet undefined;
Such might it be—that none could truly tell—
Too close enquiry his stern glance would quell.
There breathe but few whose aspect might defy
The full encounter of his searching eye;
He had the skill, when Cunning's gaze would seek
To probe his heart and watch his changing cheek,
At once the observer's purpose to espy,
And on himself roll back his scrutiny,
Lest he to Conrad rather should betray
Some secret thought, than drag that chief's to day.
There was a laughing Devil in his sneer,
That raised emotions both of rage and fear;

And where his frown of hatred darkly fell,
Hope withering fled—and Mercy sighed farewell!

X.

Slight are the outward signs of evil thought,
Within—within—'twas there the spirit wrought!
Love shows all changes—Hate, Ambition, Guile,
Betray no further than the bitter smile;
The lip's least curl, the lightest paleness thrown
Along the governed aspect, speak alone
Of deeper passions; and to judge their mien,
He, who would see, must be himself unseen.
Then—with the hurried tread, the upward eye,
The clenched hand, the pause of agony,
That listens, starting, lest the step too near
Approach instrusive on that mood of fear:
Then—with each feature working from the heart,
With feelings loosed to strengthen—not depart:

That rise—convulse—contend—that freeze, or glow,
Flush in the cheek, or damp upon the brow;
Then—Stranger! if thou canst, and tremblest not,
Behold his soul—the rest that soothes his lot!
Mark—how that lone and blighted bosom sears
The scathing thought of execrated years!
Behold—but who hath seen, or e'er shall see,
Man as himself—the secret spirit free?

XI.

Yet was not Conrad thus by Nature sent
To lead the guilty—guilt's worst instrument—
His soul was changed, before his deeds had driven
Him forth to war with man and forfeit heaven.
Warped by the world in Disappointment's school,
In words too wise, in conduct *there* a fool;
Too firm to yield, and far too proud to stoop,
Doomed by his very virtues for a dupe,

He cursed those virtues as the cause of ill,
And not the traitors who betrayed him still;
Nor deemed that gifts bestowed on better men
Had left him joy, and means to give again.
Feared—shunned—belied—ere youth had lost her force,
He hated man too much to feel remorse,
And thought the voice of wrath a sacred call,
To pay the injuries of some on all.
He knew himself a villain—but he deemed
The rest no better than the thing he seemed;
And scorned the best as hypocrites who hid
Those deeds the bolder spirit plainly did.
He knew himself detested, but he knew
The hearts that loathed him, crouched and dreaded too.
Lone, wild, and strange, he stood alike exempt
From all affection and from all contempt:
His name could sadden, and his acts surprise;
But they that feared him dared not to despise:

Man spurns the worm, but pauses ere he wake
The slumbering venom of the folded snake:
The first may turn—but not avenge the blow;
The last expires—but leaves no living foe;
Fast to the doomed offender's form it clings,
And he may crush—not conquer—still it stings!

XII.

None are all evil—quickening round his heart,
One softer feeling would not yet depart;
Oft could he sneer at others as beguiled
By passions worthy of a fool or child;
Yet 'gainst that passion vainly still he strove,
And even in him it asks the name of Love!
Yes, it was love—unchangeable—unchanged,
Felt but for one from whom he never ranged;
Though fairest captives daily met his eye,
He shunned, nor sought, but coldly passed them by;

Though many a beauty drooped in prisoned bower,
None ever soothed his most unguarded hour.
Yes—it was Love—if thoughts of tenderness,
Tried in temptation, strengthened by distress,
Unmoved by absence, firm in every clime,
And yet—Oh more than all!—untired by time;
Which nor defeated hope, nor baffled wile,
Could render sullen were she near to smile,
Nor rage could fire, nor sickness fret to vent
On her one murmur of his discontent;
Which still would meet with joy, with calmness part,
Lest that his look of grief should reach her heart;
Which nought removed, nor menaced to remove—
If there be love in mortals—this was love!
He was a villain—ay—reproaches shower
On him—but not the passion, nor its power,
Which only proved, all other virtues gone,
Not guilt itself could quench this loveliest one!

XIII.

He paused a moment—till his hastening men
Passed the first winding downward to the glen.
" Strange tidings!—many a peril have I past,
" Nor know I why this next appears the last!
" Yet so my heart forebodes, but must not fear,
" Nor shall my followers find me falter here.
" 'Tis rash to meet, but surer death to wait
" Till here they hunt us to undoubted fate;
" And, if my plan but hold, and Fortune smile,
" We'll furnish mourners for our funeral-pile.
" Ay—let them slumber—peaceful be their dreams!
" Morn ne'er awoke them with such brilliant beams
" As kindle high to-night (but blow, thou breeze!)
" To warm these slow avengers of the seas.
" Now to Medora—Oh! my sinking heart,
" Long may her own be lighter than thou art!
" Yet was I brave—mean boast where all are brave!

"Ev'n insects sting for aught they seek to save.
"This common courage which with brutes we share,
"That owes its deadliest efforts to despair,
"Small merit claims—but 'twas my nobler hope
"To teach my few with numbers still to cope;
"Long have I led them—not to vainly bleed:
"No medium now—we perish or succeed!
"So let it be—it irks not me to die;
"But thus to urge them whence they cannot fly.
"My lot hath long had little of my care,
"But chafes my pride thus baffled in the snare:
"Is this my skill? my craft? to set at last
"Hope, power, and life upon a single cast?
"Oh, Fate!—accuse thy folly, not thy fate—
"She may redeem thee still—nor yet too late."

XIV.

Thus with himself communion held he, till
He reached the summit of his tower-crowned hill:

There at the portal paused—for wild and soft
He heard those accents never heard too oft;
Through the high lattice far yet sweet they rung,
And these the notes his bird of beauty sung:

1.

"Deep in my soul that tender secret dwells,
Lonely and lost to light for evermore,
Save when to thine my heart responsive swells,
Then trembles into silence as before.

2.

"There, in its centre, a sepulchral lamp
Burns the slow flame, eternal—but unseen;
Which not the darkness of despair can damp,
Though vain its ray as it had never been.

3.

" Remember me—Oh! pass not thou my grave
 Without one thought whose relics there recline:
The only pang my bosom dare not brave,
 Must be to find forgetfulness in thine.

4.

" My fondest—faintest—latest—accents hear:
 Grief for the dead not Virtue can reprove;
Then give me all I ever asked—a tear,
 The first—last—sole reward of so much love!"

He passed the portal—crossed the corridore,
And reached the chamber as the strain gave o'er:
" My own Medora! sure thy song is sad—"

" In Conrad's absence wouldst thou have it glad?
" Without thine ear to listen to my lay,
" Still must my song my thoughts, my soul betray:

“ Still must each accent to my bosom suit,
“ My heart unhushed—although my lips were mute!
“ Oh! many a night on this lone couch reclined,
“ My dreaming fear with storms hath winged the wind,
“ And deemed the breath that faintly fanned thy sail
“ The murmuring prelude of the ruder gale;
“ Though soft, it seemed the low prophetic dirge,
“ That mourned thee floating on the savage surge:
“ Still would I rise to rouse the beacon fire,
“ Lest spies less true should let the blaze expire;
“ And many a restless hour outwatched each star,
“ And morning came—and still thou wert afar.
“ Oh! how the chill blast on my bosom blew,
“ And day broke dreary on my troubled view,
“ And still I gazed and gazed—and not a prow
“ Was granted to my tears—my truth—my vow!
“ At length—'twas noon—I hailed and blest the mast
“ That met my sight—it neared—Alas! it past!

"Another came—Oh God! 'twas thine at last!
"Would that those days were over! wilt thou ne'er,
"My Conrad! learn the joys of peace to share?
"Sure thou hast more than wealth; and many a home
"As bright as this invites us not to roam:
"Thou know'st it is not peril that I fear,
"I only tremble when thou art not here;
"Then not for mine, but that far dearer life,
"Which flies from love and languishes for strife—
"How strange that heart, to me so tender still,
"Should war with nature and its better will!"

"Yea, strange indeed—that heart hath long been changed;
"Worm-like 'twas trampled—adder-like avenged,
"Without one hope on earth beyond thy love,
"And scarce a glimpse of mercy from above.
"Yet the same feeling which thou dost condemn,
"My very love to thee is hate to them,

" So closely mingling here, that disentwined,
" I cease to love thee when I love mankind:
" Yet dread not this—the proof of all the past
" Assures the future that my love will last;
" But—Oh, Medora! nerve thy gentler heart,
" This hour again—but not for long—we part."

" This hour we part!—my heart foreboded this:
" Thus ever fade my fairy dreams of bliss.
" This hour—it cannot be—this hour away!
" Yon bark hath hardly anchored in the bay:
" Her consort still is absent, and her crew
" Have need of rest before they toil anew;
" My love! thou mock'st my weakness; and would'st steel
" My breast before the time when it must feel;
" But trifle now no more with my distress,
" Such mirth hath less of play than bitterness.

“ Be silent, Conrad!—dearest! come and share
“ The feast these hands delighted to prepare;
“ Light toil! to cull and dress thy frugal fare!
“ See, I have plucked the fruit that promised best,
“ And where not sure, perplexed, but pleased, I guessed
“ At such as seemed the fairest: thrice the hill
“ My steps have wound to try the coolest rill;
“ Yes! thy Sherbet to-night will sweetly flow,
“ See how it sparkles in its vase of snow!
“ The grapes' gay juice thy bosom never cheers;
“ Thou more than Moslem when the cup appears:
“ Think not I mean to chide—for I rejoice
“ What others deem a penance is thy choice.
“ But come, the board is spread; our silver lamp
“ Is trimmed, and heeds not the Sirocco's damp:
“ Then shall my handmaids while the time along,
“ And join with me the dance, or wake the song;

" Or my guitar, which still thou lov'st to hear,
" Shall soothe or lull—or, should it vex thine ear,
" We'll turn the tale, by Ariosto told,
" Of fair Olympia loved and left of old.[1]
" Why—thou wert worse than he who broke his vow
" To that lost damsel, shouldst thou leave me now;
" Or even that traitor chief—I've seen thee smile,
" When the clear sky showed Ariadne's Isle,
" Which I have pointed from these cliffs the while:
" And thus, half sportive half in fear, I said,
" Lest Time should raise that doubt to more than dread,
" Thus Conrad, too, will quit me for the main:
" And he deceived me—for—he came again!"

" Again—again—and oft again—my love!
" If there be life below, and hope above,
" He will return—but now, the moments bring
" The time of parting with redoubled wing:

"The why—the where—what boots it now to tell?
"Since all must end in that wild word—farewell!
"Yet would I fain—did time allow—disclose—
"Fear not—these are no formidable foes;
"And here shall watch a more than wonted guard,
"For sudden siege and long defence prepared:
"Nor be thou lonely—though thy lord's away,
"Our matrons and thy handmaids with thee stay;
"And this thy comfort—that, when next we meet,
"Security shall make repose more sweet:
"List!—'tis the bugle—Juan shrilly blew—
"One kiss—one more—another—Oh! Adieu!"

She rose—she sprung—she clung to his embrace,
Till his heart heaved beneath her hidden face.
He dared not raise to his that deep-blue eye,
Which downcast drooped in tearless agony.
Her long fair hair lay floating o'er his arms,
In all the wildness of dishevelled charms;

Scarce beat that bosom where his image dwelt
So full—*that* feeling seemed almost unfelt!
Hark—peals the thunder of the signal-gun!
It told 'twas sunset—and he cursed that sun.
Again—again—that form he madly pressed,
Which mutely clasped, imploringly caressed!
And tottering to the couch his bride he bore,
One moment gazed—as if to gaze no more;
Felt—that for him earth held but her alone,
Kissed her cold forehead—turned—is Conrad gone?

XV.

"And is he gone?"—on sudden solitude
How oft that fearful question will intrude?
"'Twas but an instant past—and here he stood!
"And now"—without the portal's porch she rushed,
And then at length her tears in freedom gushed;
Big—bright—and fast, unknown to her they fell;
But still her lips refused to send—"Farewell!"

For in that word—that fatal word—howe'er
We promise—hope—believe—there breathes despair.
O'er every feature of that still, pale face,
Had sorrow fixed what time can ne'er erase:
The tender blue of that large loving eye
Grew frozen with its gaze on vacancy,
Till—Oh, how far!—it caught a glimpse of him,
And then it flowed—and phrenzied seemed to swim
Through those long, dark, and glistening lashes dewed
With drops of sadness oft to be renewed.
"He's gone!"—against her heart that hand is driven,
Convulsed and quick—then gently raised to heaven;
She looked and saw the heaving of the main;
The white sail set—she dared not look again;
But turned with sickening soul within the gate—
"It is no dream—and I am desolate!"

XVI.

From crag to crag descending—swiftly sped
Stern Conrad down, nor once he turned his head;
But shrunk whene'er the windings of his way
Forced on his eye what he would not survey,
His lone, but lovely dwelling on the steep,
That hailed him first when homeward from the deep:
And she—the dim and melancholy star,
Whose ray of beauty reached him from afar,
On her he must not gaze, he must not think,
There he might rest—but on Destruction's brink:
Yet once almost he stopped—and nearly gave
His fate to chance, his projects to the wave;
But no—it must not be—a worthy chief
May melt, but not betray to woman's grief.
He sees his bark, he notes how fair the wind,
And sternly gathers all his might of mind:
Again he hurries on—and as he hears
The clang of tumult vibrate on his ears,

The busy sounds, the bustle of the shore,
The shout, the signal, and the dashing oar;
As marks his eye the seaboy on the mast,
The anchor's rise, the sails unfurling fast,
The waving kerchiefs of the crowd that urge
That mute adieu to those who stem the surge;
And more than all, his blood-red flag aloft,
He marvelled how his heart could seem so soft.
Fire in his glance, and wildness in his breast,
He feels of all his former self possest;
He bounds—he flies—until his footsteps reach
The verge where ends the cliff, begins the beach,
There checks his speed; but pauses less to breathe
The breezy freshness of the deep beneath,
Than there his wonted statelier step renew;
Nor rush, disturbed by haste, to vulgar view:
For well had Conrad learned to curb the crowd,
By arts that veil, and oft preserve the proud;

His was the lofty port, the distant mien,
That seems to shun the sight—and awes if seen:
The solemn aspect, and the high-born eye,
That checks low mirth, but lacks not courtesy;
All these he wielded to command assent:
But where he wished to win, so well unbent,
That kindness cancelled fear in those who heard,
And other's gifts shewed mean beside his word,
When echoed to the heart as from his own 551
His deep yet tender melody of tone:
But such was foreign to his wonted mood,
He cared not what he softened, but subdued;
The evil passions of his youth had made
Him value less who loved—than what obeyed.

XVII.

Around him mustering ranged his ready guard.
Before him Juan stands—"Are all prepared?"

"They are—nay more—embarked: the latest boat
"Waits but my chief——"
"My sword, and my capote."
Soon firmly girded on, and lightly slung,
His belt and cloak were o'er his shoulders flung;
"Call Pedro here!" He comes—and Conrad bends,
With all the courtesy he deigned his friends;
"Receive these tablets, and peruse with care,
"Words of high trust and truth are graven there;
"Double the guard, and when Anselmo's bark
"Arrives, let him alike these orders mark:
"In three days (serve the breeze) the sun shall shine
"On our return—till then all peace be thine!"
This said, his brother Pirate's hand he wrung,
Then to his boat with haughty gesture sprung.
Flashed the dipt oars, and sparkling with the stroke,
Around the waves' phosphoric[2] brightness broke;
They gain the vessel—on the deck he stands;
Shrieks the shrill whistle—ply the busy hands—

He marks how well the ship her helm obeys,
How gallant all her crew—and deigns to praise.
His eyes of pride to young Gonsalvo turn—
Why doth he start, and inly seem to mourn?
Alas! those eyes beheld his rocky tower,
And live a moment o'er the parting hour;
She—his Medora—did she mark the prow?
Ah! never loved he half so much as now!
But much must yet be done ere dawn of day—
Again he mans himself and turns away;
Down to the cabin with Gonsalvo bends,
And there unfolds his plan—his means—and ends;
Before them burns the lamp, and spreads the chart,
And all that speaks and aids the naval art;
They to the midnight watch protract debate;
To anxious eyes what hour is ever late?
Mean time, the steady breeze serenely blew,
And fast and Falcon-like the vessel flew;

Passed the high headlands of each clustering isle,
To gain their port—long—long ere morning smile:
And soon the night-glass through the narrow bay
Discovers where the Pacha's galleys lay.
Count they each sail—and mark how there supine
The lights in vain o'er heedless Moslem shine.
Secure, unnoted, Conrad's prow passed by,
And anchored where his ambush meant to lie;
Screened from espial by the jutting cape,
That rears on high its rude fantastic shape.
Then rose his band to duty—not from sleep—
Equipped for deeds alike on land or deep;
While leaned their leader o'er the fretting flood,
And calmly talked—and yet he talked of blood!

END OF CANTO I.

THE CORSAIR.

CANTO II.

"Conosceste i dubiosi desiri?"

DANTE.

I.

In Coron's bay floats many a Galley light,
Through Coron's lattices the lamps are bright,
For Seyd, the Pacha, makes a feast to-night:
A feast for promised triumph yet to come,
When he shall drag the fettered Rovers home;
This hath he sworn by Alla and his sword,
And faithful to his firman and his word,
His summoned prows collect along the coast,
And great the gathering crews, and loud the boast;

Already shared the captives and the prize,
Though far the distant foe they thus despise;
'Tis but to sail—no doubt to-morrow's Sun
Will see the Pirates bound—their haven won!
Mean time the watch may slumber, if they will,
Nor only wake to war, but dreaming kill.
Though all, who can, disperse on shore and seek
To flesh their glowing valour on the Greek;
How well such deed becomes the turbaned brave—
To bare the sabre's edge before a slave!
Infest his dwelling—but forbear to slay,
Their arms are strong, yet merciful to-day,
And do not deign to smite because they may!
Unless some gay caprice suggests the blow,
To keep in practice for the coming foe.
Revel and rout the evening hours beguile,
And they who wish to wear a head must smile;
For Moslem mouths produce their choicest cheer,
And hoard their curses, till the coast is clear.

II.

High in his hall reclines the turbaned Seyd;
Around—the bearded chiefs he came to lead.
Removed the banquet, and the last pilaff—
Forbidden draughts, 'tis said, he dared to quaff,
Though to the rest the sober berry's juice,[3]
The slaves bear round for rigid Moslem's use;
The long Chibouque's[4] dissolving cloud supply,
While dance the Almas[5] to wild minstrelsy.
The rising morn will view the chiefs embark;
But waves are somewhat treacherous in the dark:
And revellers may more securely sleep
On silken couch than o'er the rugged deep;
Feast there who can—nor combat till they must,
And less to conquest than to Korans trust;
And yet the numbers crowded in his host
Might warrant more than even the Pacha's boast.

III.

With cautious reverence from the outer gate,
Slow stalks the slave, whose office there to wait,
Bows his bent head—his hand salutes the floor,
Ere yet his tongue the trusted tidings bore:
" A captive Dervise, from the pirate's nest
" Escaped, is here—himself would tell the rest."
He took the sign from Seyd's assenting eye,
And led the holy man in silence nigh.
His arms were folded on his dark-green vest,
His step was feeble, and his look deprest;
Yet worn he seemed of hardship more than years,
And pale his cheek with penance, not from fears.
Vowed to his God—his sable locks he wore,
And these his lofty cap rose proudly o'er:
Around his form his loose long robe was thrown,
And wrapt a breast bestowed on heaven alone;
Submissive, yet with self-possession manned,
He calmly met the curious eyes that scanned;

And question of his coming fain would seek,
Before the Pacha's will allowed to speak.

IV.

"Whence com'st thou, Dervise?"
"From the outlaw's den,
"A fugitive—"
"Thy capture where and when?"
"From Scalanova's port to Scio's isle,
"The Saick was bound; but Alla did not smile
"Upon our course—the Moslem merchant's gains
"The Rovers won: our limbs have worn their chains.
"I had no death to fear, nor wealth to boast,
"Beyond the wandering freedom which I lost;
"At length a fisher's humble boat by night
"Afforded hope, and offered chance of flight:
"I seized the hour, and find my safety here—
"With thee—most mighty Pacha! who can fear?"

" How speed the outlaws? stand they well prepared,
" Their plundered wealth, and robber's rock, to guard?
" Dream they of this our preparation, doomed
" To view with fire their scorpion nest consumed?"

" Pacha! the fettered captive's mourning eye
" That weeps for flight, but ill can play the spy;
" I only heard the reckless waters roar,
" Those waves that would not bear me from the shore;
" I only marked the glorious sun and sky,
" Too bright—too blue—for my captivity;
" And felt—that all which Freedom's bosom cheers,
" Must break my chain before it dried my tears.
" This may'st thou judge, at least, from my escape,
" They little deem of aught in peril's shape;
" Else vainly had I prayed or sought the chance
" That leads me here—if eyed with vigilance:

" The careless guard that did not see me fly,
" May watch as idly when thy power is nigh:
" Pacha!—my limbs are faint—and nature craves
" Food for my hunger, rest from tossing waves;
" Permit my absence—peace be with thee! Peace
" With all around!—now grant repose—release."

" Stay, Dervise! I have more to question—stay,
" I do command thee—sit—dost hear?—obey!
" More I must ask, and food the slaves shall bring;
" Thou shalt not pine where all are banqueting:
" The supper done—prepare thee to reply, 711
" Clearly and full—I love not mystery."

'Twere vain to guess what shook the pious man,
Who looked not lovingly on that Divan;
Nor showed high relish for the banquet prest,
And less respect for every fellow guest.

'Twas but a moment's peevish hectic past
Along his cheek, and tranquillized as fast:
He sate him down in silence, and his look
Resumed the calmness which before forsook:
The feast was ushered in—but sumptuous fare
He shunned as if some poison mingled there.
For one so long condemned to toil and fast,
Methinks he strangely spares the rich repast.
"What ails thee, Dervise? eat—dost thou suppose
"This feast a Christian's? or my friends thy foes?
"Why dost thou shun the salt? that sacred pledge,
"Which, once partaken, blunts the sabre's edge,
"Makes even contending tribes in peace unite,
"And hated hosts seem brethren to the sight!"

"Salt seasons dainties—and my food is still
"The humblest root, my drink the simplest rill;
"And my stern vow and order's[6] laws oppose
"To break or mingle bread with friends or foes;

" It may seem strange—if there be aught to dread,
" That peril rests upon my single head;
" But for thy sway—nay more—thy Sultan's throne,
" I taste nor bread nor banquet—save alone;
" Infringed our order's rule, the Prophet's rage
" To Mecca's dome might bar my pilgrimage."

" Well—as thou wilt—ascetic as thou art— 741
" One question answer; then in peace depart.
" How many?—Ha! it cannot sure be day?
" What star—what sun is bursting on the bay?
" It shines a lake of fire!—away—away!
" Ho! treachery! my guards! my scimitar!
" The galleys feed the flames—and I afar!
" Accursed Dervise!—these thy tidings—thou
" Some villain spy—seize—cleave him—slay him now!"

Up rose the Dervise with that burst of light,
Nor less his change of form appalled the sight:
Up rose that Dervise—not in saintly garb,
But like a warrior bounding on his barb,
Dashed his high cap, and tore his robe away—
Shone his mailed breast, and flashed his sabre's ray!
His close but glittering casque, and sable plume,
More glittering eye, and black brow's sabler gloom,
Glared on the Moslems' eyes some Afrit sprite,
Whose demon death-blow left no hope for fight.
The wild confusion, and the swarthy glow
Of flames on high, and torches from below;
The shriek of terror, and the mingling yell—
For swords began to clash, and shouts to swell,
Flung o'er that spot of earth the air of hell!
Distracted, to and fro, the flying slaves
Behold but bloody shore and fiery waves;
Nought heeded they the Pacha's angry cry,
They seize that Dervise!—seize on Zatanai![7]

He saw their terror—checked the first despair
That urged him but to stand and perish there,
Since far too early and too well obeyed,
The flame was kindled ere the signal made;
He saw their terror—from his baldric drew
His bugle—brief the blast—but shrilly blew,
'Tis answered—"Well ye speed, my gallant crew!
"Why did I doubt their quickness of career?
"And deem design had left me single here?"
Sweeps his long arm—that sabre's whirling sway,
Sheds fast atonement for its first delay;
Completes his fury, what their fear begun,
And makes the many basely quail to one.
The cloven turbans o'er the chamber spread,
And scarce an arm dare rise to guard its head:
Even Seyd, convulsed, o'erwhelmed with rage, surprise,
Retreats before him, though he still defies.

No craven he—and yet he dreads the blow,
So much Confusion magnifies his foe!
His blazing galleys still distract his sight,
He tore his beard, and foaming fled the fight;[8]
For now the pirates passed the Haram gate,
And burst within—and it were death to wait;
Where wild Amazement shrieking—kneeling—throws
The sword aside—in vain—the blood o'erflows!
The Corsairs pouring, haste to where within,
Invited Conrad's bugle, and the din
Of groaning victims, and wild cries for life,
Proclaimed how well he did the work of strife.
They shout to find him grim and lonely there,
A glutted tyger mangling in his lair!
But short their greeting—shorter his reply—
"'Tis well—but Seyd escapes—and he must die.
"Much hath been done—but more remains to do—
"Their galleys blaze—why not their city too?"

V.

Quick at the word—they seized him each a torch,
And fire the dome from minaret to porch.
A stern delight was fixed in Conrad's eye,
But sudden sunk—for on his ear the cry
Of women struck, and like a deadly knell
Knocked at that heart unmoved by battle's yell.
"Oh! burst the Haram—wrong not on your lives
"One female form—remember—*we* have wives.
"On them such outrage Vengeance will repay;
"Man is our foe, and such 'tis ours to slay:
"But still we spared—must spare the weaker prey.
"Oh! I forgot—but Heaven will not forgive
"If at my word the helpless cease to live;
"Follow who will—I go—we yet have time
"Our souls to lighten of at least a crime."
He climbs the crackling stair—he bursts the door,
Nor feels his feet glow scorching with the floor;

His breath choaked gasping with the volumed smoke,
But still from room to room his way he broke.
They search—they find—they save: with lusty arms
Each bears a prize of unregarded charms;
Calm their loud fears; sustain their sinking frames
With all the care defenceless beauty claims:
So well could Conrad tame their fiercest mood,
And check the very hands with gore imbrued.
But who is she? whom Conrad's arms convey
From reeking pile and combat's wreck—away—
Who but the love of him he dooms to bleed? 831
The Haram queen—but still the slave of Seyd!

VI.

Brief time had Conrad now to greet Gulnare,
Few words to reassure the trembling fair;
For in that pause compassion snatched from war,
The foe before retiring, fast and far,

With wonder saw their footsteps unpursued,
First slowlier fled—then rallied—then withstood.
This Seyd perceives, then first perceives how few,
Compared with his, the Corsair's roving crew,
And blushes o'er his error, as he eyes
The ruin wrought by panic and surprise.
Alla il Alla! Vengeance swells the cry—
Shame mounts to rage that must atone or die!
And flame for flame and blood for blood must tell,
The tide of triumph ebbs that flowed too well—
When wrath returns to renovated strife,
And those who fought for conquest strike for life.
Conrad beheld the danger—he beheld
His followers faint by freshening foes repelled:
"One effort—one—to break the circling host!"
They form—unite—charge—waver—all is lost!
Within a narrower ring compressed, beset,
Hopeless, not heartless, strive and struggle yet—

Ah! now they fight in firmest file no more,
Hemmed in—cut off—cleft down—and trampled o'er;
But each strikes singly, silently, and home,
And sinks outwearied rather than o'ercome,
His last faint quittance rendering with his breath,
Till the blade glimmers in the grasp of death!

VII.

But first, ere came the rallying host to blows,
And rank to rank, and hand to hand oppose,
Gulnare and all her Haram handmaids freed,
Safe in the dome of one who held their creed,
By Conrad's mandate safely were bestowed,
And dried those tears for life and fame that flowed:
And when that dark-eyed lady, young Gulnare,
Recalled those thoughts late wandering in despair,
Much did she marvel o'er the courtesy
That smoothed his accents; softened in his eye:

'Twas strange—*that* robber thus with gore bedewed,
Seemed gentler then than Seyd in fondest mood.
The Pacha wooed as if he deemed the slave
Must seem delighted with the heart he gave;
The Corsair vowed protection, soothed affright,
As if his homage were a woman's right.
"The wish is wrong—nay worse for female—vain:
"Yet much I long to view that chief again;
"If but to thank for, what my fear forgot,
"The life—my loving lord remembered not!"

VIII.

And him she saw, where thickest carnage spread,
But gathered breathing from the happier dead;
Far from his band, and battling with a host
That deem right dearly won the field he lost,
Felled—bleeding—baffled of the death he sought,
And snatched to expiate all the ills he wrought;

Preserved to linger and to live in vain,
While Vengeance pondered o'er new plans of pain,
And staunched the blood she saves to shed again—
But drop by drop, for Seyd's unglutted eye
Would doom him ever dying—ne'er to die!
Can this be he? triumphant late she saw,
When his red hand's wild gesture waved, a law!
'Tis he indeed—disarmed but undeprest,
His sole regret the life he still possest;
His wounds too slight, though taken with that will,
Which would have kissed the hand that then could kill.
Oh were there none, of all the many given,
To send his soul—he scarcely asked to heaven?
Must he alone of all retain his breath,
Who more than all had striv'n and struck for death?
He deeply felt—what mortal hearts must feel,
When thus reversed on faithless fortune's wheel,
For crimes committed, and the victor's threat
Of lingering tortures to repay the debt

He deeply, darkly felt; but evil pride
That led to perpetrate—now serves to hide.
Still in his stern and self-collected mien
A conqueror's more than captive's air is seen,
Though faint with wasting toil and stiffening wound,
But few that saw—so calmly gazed around:
Though the far shouting of the distant crowd,
Their tremors o'er, rose insolently loud,
The better warriors who beheld him near,
Insulted not the foe who taught them fear;
And the grim guards that to his durance led,
In silence eyed him with a secret dread.

IX.

The Leech was sent—but not in mercy—there
To note how much the life yet left could bear;
He found enough to load with heaviest chain,
And promise feeling for the wrench of pain:

To-morrow—yea—to-morrow's evening sun
Will sinking see impalement's pangs begun,
And rising with the wonted blush of morn
Behold how well or ill those pangs are borne.
Of torments this the longest and the worst,
Which adds all other agony to thirst,
That day by day death still forbears to slake,
While famished vultures flit around the stake.
" Oh! water—water!"—smiling Hate denies
The victim's prayer—for if he drinks—he dies.
This was his doom:—the Leech, the guard were gone,
And left proud Conrad fettered and alone.

X.

'Twere vain to paint to what his feelings grew—
It even were doubtful if their victim knew.
There is a war, a chaos of the mind,
When all its elements convulsed—combined—

Lie dark and jarring with perturbed force,
And gnashing with impenitent Remorse;
That juggling fiend—who never spake before—
But cries, "I warned thee!" when the deed is o'er.
Vain voice! the spirit burning but unbent,
May writhe—rebel—the weak alone repent!
Even in that lonely hour when most it feels,
And, to itself, all—all that self reveals,
No single passion, and no ruling thought
That leaves the rest as once unseen, unsought;
But the wild prospect when the soul reviews—
All rushing through their thousand avenues.
Ambition's dreams expiring, love's regret,
Endangered glory, life itself beset;
The joy untasted, the contempt or hate
'Gainst those who fain would triumph in our fate;
The hopeless past, the hasting future driven
Too quickly on to guess if hell or heaven;

Deeds, thoughts, and words, perhaps remembered not
So keenly till that hour, but ne'er forgot;
Things light or lovely in their acted time,
But now to stern reflection each a crime;
The withering sense of evil unrevealed,
Not cankering less because the more concealed—
All, in a word, from which all eyes must start,
That opening sepulchre—the naked heart
Bares with its buried woes, till Pride awake,
To snatch the mirror from the soul—and break.
Ay—Pride can veil, and Courage brave it all,
All—all—before—beyond—the deadliest fall.
Each hath some fear, and he who least betrays,
The only hypocrite deserving praise:
Not the loud recreant wretch who boasts and flies;
But he who looks on death—and silent dies.
So steeled by pondering o'er his far career,
He halfway meets him should he menace near!

XI.

In the high chamber of his highest tower,
Sate Conrad, fettered in the Pacha's power.
His palace perished in the flame—this fort
Contained at once his captive and his court.
Not much could Conrad of his sentence blame,
His foe, if vanquished, had but shared the same:—
Alone he sate—in solitude had scanned
His guilty bosom, but that breast he manned:
One thought alone he could not—dared not meet.
"Oh, how these tidings will Medora greet?"
Then—only then—his clanking hands he raised,
And strained with rage the chain on which he gazed;
But soon he found—or feigned—or dreamed relief,
And smiled in self-derision of his grief,
"And now come torture when it will—or may,
"More need of rest to nerve me for the day!"

This said, with languor to his mat he crept,
And, whatsoe'er his visions, quickly slept.

'Twas hardly midnight when that fray begun,
For Conrad's plans matured, at once were done;
And Havoc loathes so much the waste of time,
She scarce had left an uncommitted crime.
One hour beheld him since the tide he stemmed—
Disguised—discovered—conquering—ta'en—condemned—
A chief on land—an outlaw on the deep—
Destroying—saving—prisoned—and asleep!

XII.

He slept in calmest seeming—for his breath
Was hushed so deep—Ah! happy if in death!
He slept—Who o'er his placid slumber bends?
His foes are gone—and here he hath no friends;

Is it some seraph sent to grant him grace?
No, 'tis an earthly form with heavenly face!
Its white arm raised a lamp—yet gently hid,
Lest the ray flash abruptly on the lid
Of that closed eye, which opens but to pain,
And once unclosed—but once may close again.
That form, with eye so dark, and cheek so fair,
And auburn waves of gemmed and braided hair;
With shape of fairy lightness—naked foot,
That shines like snow, and falls on earth as mute—
Through guards and dunnest night how came it there?
Ah! rather ask what will not woman dare?
Whom youth and pity lead like thee, Gulnare!
She could not sleep—and while the Pacha's rest
In muttering dreams yet saw his pirate-guest,
She left his side—his signet ring she bore,
Which oft in sport adorned her hand before—

And with it, scarcely questioned, won her way
Through drowsy guards that must that sign obey.
Worn out with toil, and tired with changing blows,
Their eyes had envied Conrad his repose;
And chill and nodding at the turret door,
They stretch their listless limbs, and watch no more:
Just raised their heads to hail the signet-ring,
Nor ask or what or who the sign may bring.

XIII.

She gazed in wonder, " Can he calmly sleep,
" While other eyes his fall or ravage weep?
" And mine in restlessness are wandering here—
" What sudden spell hath made this man so dear?
" True—'tis to him my life, and more, I owe,
" And me and mine he spared from worse than woe:
" 'Tis late to think—but soft—his slumber breaks—
" How heavily he sighs!—he starts—awakes!"

He raised his head—and dazzled with the light,
His eye seemed dubious if it saw aright:
He moved his hand—the grating of his chain
Too harshly told him that he lived again.
" What is that form? if not a shape of air,
" Methinks, my jailor's face shows wond'rous fair!"

" Pirate! thou know'st me not—but I am one,
" Grateful for deeds thou hast too rarely done;
" Look on me—and remember her, thy hand
" Snatched from the flames, and thy more fearful band.
" I come through darkness—and I scarce know why—
" Yet not to hurt—I would not see thee die."

" If so, kind lady! thine the only eye
" That would not here in that gay hope delight:
" Theirs is the chance—and let them use their right.

"But still I thank their courtesy or thine,
"That would confess me at so fair a shrine!"

Strange though it seem—yet with extremest grief
Is linked a mirth—it doth not bring relief—
That playfulness of Sorrow ne'er beguiles,
And smiles in bitterness—but still it smiles;
And sometimes with the wisest and the best,
Till even the scaffold[10] echoes with their jest!
Yet not the joy to which it seems akin—
It may deceive all hearts, save that within.
Whate'er it was that flashed on Conrad, now
A laughing wildness half unbent his brow:
And these his accents had a sound of mirth,
As if the last he could enjoy on earth;
Yet 'gainst his nature—for through that short life,
Few thoughts had he to spare from gloom and strife.

XIV.

" Corsair! thy doom is named—but I have power
" To soothe the Pacha in his weaker hour.
" Thee would I spare—nay more—would save thee now,
" But this—time—hope—nor even thy strength allow;
" But all I can, I will: at least, delay
" The sentence that remits thee scarce a day.
" More now were ruin—even thyself were loth
" The vain attempt should bring but doom to both."

" Yes!—loth indeed:—my soul is nerved to all,
" Or fall'n too low to fear a further fall:
" Tempt not thyself with peril; me with hope,
" Of flight from foes with whom I could not cope;
" Unfit to vanquish—shall I meanly fly,
" The one of all my band that would not die?

"Yet there is one—to whom my memory clings,
"'Till to these eyes her own wild softness springs.
"My sole resources in the path I trod
"Were these—my bark—my sword—my love—my
God!
"The last I left in youth—he leaves me now—
"And Man but works his will to lay me low.
"I have no thought to mock his throne with prayer
"Wrung from the coward crouching of despair;
"It is enough—I breathe—and I can bear.
"My sword is shaken from the worthless hand
"That might have better kept so true a brand;
"My bark is sunk or captive—but my love—
"For her in sooth my voice would mount above:
"Oh! she is all that still to earth can bind—
"And this will break a heart so more than kind,
"And blight a form—till thine appeared, Gulnare!
"Mine eye ne'er asked if others were as fair?"

" Thou lov'st another then?—but what to me
" Is this—'tis nothing—nothing e'er can be:
" But yet—thou lov'st—and—Oh! I envy those
" Whose hearts on hearts as faithful can repose,
" Who never feel the void—the wandering thought
" That sighs o'er visions—such as mine hath wrought."

" Lady—methought thy love was his, for whom
" This arm redeemed thee from a fiery tomb."

" My love stern Seyd's! Oh—No—No—not my love—
" Yet much this heart, that strives no more, once strove
" To meet his passion—but it would not be.
" I felt—I feel—love dwells with—with the free.
" I am a slave, a favoured slave at best,
" To share his splendour, and seem very blest!

"Oft must my soul the question undergo,
"Of—'Dost thou love?' and burn to answer 'No!'
"Oh! hard it is that fondness to sustain,
"And struggle not to feel averse in vain;
"But harder still the heart's recoil to bear,
"And hide from one—perhaps another there. 1119
"He takes the hand I give not—nor withhold—
"Its pulse nor checked—nor quickened—calmly cold:
"And when resigned, it drops a lifeless weight
"From one I never loved enough to hate.
"No warmth these lips return by his imprest,
"And chilled remembrance shudders o'er the rest.
"Yes—had I ever proved that passion's zeal,
"The change to hatred were at least to feel:
"But still—he goes unmourned—returns unsought—
"And oft when present—absent from my thought.
"Or when reflection comes, and come it must—
"I fear that henceforth 'twill but bring disgust;

" I am his slave—but, in despite of pride,
" 'Twere worse than bondage to become his bride.
" Oh! that this dotage of his breast would cease!
" Or seek another and give mine release,
" But yesterday—I could have said, to peace!
" Yes—if unwonted fondness now I feign,
" Remember—captive! 'tis to break thy chain.
" Repay the life that to thy hand I owe;
" To give thee back to all endeared below,
" Who share such love as I can never know.
" Farewell—morn breaks—and I must now away:
" 'Twill cost me dear—but dread no death to-day!"

XV.

She pressed his fettered fingers to her heart,
And bowed her head, and turned her to depart,
And noiseless as a lovely dream is gone.
And was she here? and is he now alone?

What gem hath dropped and sparkles o'er his chain?
The tear most sacred, shed for other's pain,
That starts at once—bright—pure—from Pity's mine,
Already polished by the hand divine!

Oh! too convincing—dangerously dear—
In woman's eye the unanswerable tear!
That weapon of her weakness she can wield,
To save, subdue—at once her spear and shield:
Avoid it—Virtue ebbs and Wisdom errs,
Too fondly gazing on that grief of hers!
What lost a world, and bade a hero fly?
The timid tear in Cleopatra's eye.
Yet be the soft triumvir's fault forgiven,
By this—how many lose not earth—but heaven!
Consign their souls to man's eternal foe,
And seal their own to spare some wanton's woe!

XVI.

'Tis morn—and o'er his altered features play
The beams—without the hope of yesterday.
What shall he be ere night? perchance a thing
O'er which the raven flaps her funeral wing:
By his closed eye unheeded and unfelt,
While sets that sun, and dews of evening melt,
Chill—wet—and misty round each stiffened limb,
Refreshing earth—reviving all but him!—

END OF CANTO II

THE CORSAIR.

CANTO III.

"Come vedi—ancor non m'abbandona."

DANTE.

I.

Slow sinks, more lovely ere his race be run,
Along Morea's hills the setting sun;
Not, as in Northern climes, obscurely bright,
But one unclouded blaze of living light!
O'er the hushed deep the yellow beam he throws,
Gilds the green wave, that trembles as it glows.
On old Ægina's rock, and Idra's isle,
The god of gladness sheds his parting smile;

O'er his own regions lingering, loves to shine,
Though there his altars are no more divine.
Descending fast the mountain shadows kiss
Thy glorious gulph, unconquered Salamis!
Their azure arches through the long expanse
More deeply purpled meet his mellowing glance,
And tenderest tints, along their summits driven,
Mark his gay course and own the hues of heaven;
Till, darkly shaded from the land and deep,
Behind his Delphian cliff he sinks to sleep.

On such an eve, his palest beam he cast,
When—Athens! here thy Wisest looked his last.
How watched thy better sons his farewell ray,
That closed their murdered sage's[11] latest day!
Not yet—not yet—Sol pauses on the hill—
The precious hour of parting lingers still;

But sad his light to agonizing eyes,
And dark the mountain's once delightful dyes:
Gloom o'er the lovely land he seemed to pour,
The land, where Phœbus never frowned before,
But ere he sunk below Cithæron's head,
The cup of woe was quaffed—the spirit fled;
The soul of him who scorned to fear or fly—
Who lived and died, as none can live or die!

But lo! from high Hymettus to the plain,
The queen of night asserts her silent reign.[12]
No murky vapour, herald of the storm,
Hides her fair face, nor girds her glowing form;
With cornice glimmering as the moon-beams play,
There the white column greets her grateful ray,
And, bright around with quivering beams beset,
Her emblem sparkles o'er the minaret:
The groves of olive scattered dark and wide
Where meek Cephisus pours his scanty tide,

The cypress saddening by the sacred mosque,
The gleaming turret of the gay Kiosk,[13]
And, dun and sombre 'mid the holy calm,
Near Theseus' fane yon solitary palm,
All tinged with varied hues arrest the eye—
And dull were his that passed them heedless by.

Again the Ægean, heard no more afar,
Lulls his chafed breast from elemental war;
Again his waves in milder tints unfold
Their long array of sapphire and of gold,
Mixt with the shades of many a distant isle,
That frown—where gentler ocean seems to smile.[14]

II.

Not now my theme—why turn my thoughts to thee?
Oh! who can look along thy native sea,
Nor dwell upon thy name, whate'er the tale,
So much its magic must o'er all prevail?

Who that beheld that Sun upon thee set,
Fair Athens! could thine evening face forget?
Not he—whose heart nor time nor distance frees,
Spell-bound within the clustering Cyclades!
Nor seems this homage foreign to his strain,
His Corsair's isle was once thine own domain—
Would that with freedom it were thine again!

III.

The Sun hath sunk—and, darker than the night,
Sinks with its beam upon the beacon height—
Medora's heart—the third day's come and gone—
With it he comes not—sends not—faithless one!
The wind was fair though light; and storms were none.
Last eve Anselmo's bark returned, and yet
His only tidings that they had not met!
Though wild, as now, far different were the tale
Had Conrad waited for that single sail.

The night-breeze freshens—she that day had past
In watching all that Hope proclaimed a mast;
Sadly she sate—on high—Impatience bore
At last her footsteps to the midnight shore,
And there she wandered heedless of the spray
That dashed her garments oft, and warned away:
She saw not—felt not this—nor dared depart,
Nor deemed it cold—her chill was at her heart;
Till grew such certainty from that suspense—
His very Sight had shocked from life or sense!

It came at last—a sad and shattered boat,
Whose inmates first beheld whom first they sought;
Some bleeding—all most wretched—these the few—
Scarce knew they how escaped—*this* all they knew.
In silence, darkling, each appeared to wait
His fellow's mournful guess at Conrad's fate:
Something they would have said; but seemed to fear
To trust their accents to Medora's ear.

She saw at once, yet sunk not—trembled not—
Beneath that grief, that loneliness of lot,
Within that meek fair form, were feelings high,
That deemed not till they found their energy.
While yet was Hope—they softened—fluttered—wept—
All lost—that softness died not—but it slept;
And o'er its slumber rose that Strength which said,
"With nothing left to love—there's nought to dread." 1271
'Tis more than nature's; like the burning might
Delirium gathers from the fever's height.

"Silent you stand—nor would I hear you tell
"What—speak not—breathe not—for I know it well—
"Yet would I ask—almost my lip denies
"The—quick your answer—tell me where he lies?"

" Lady! we know not—scarce with life we fled;
" But here is one denies that he is dead:
" He saw him bound; and bleeding—but alive."

She heard no further—'twas in vain to strive—
So throbbed each vein—each thought—till then withstood;
Her own dark soul—these words at once subdued:
She totters—falls—and senseless had the wave
Perchance but snatched her from another grave;
But that with hands though rude, yet weeping eyes,
They yield such aid as Pity's haste supplies:
Dash o'er her deathlike cheek the ocean dew,
Raise—fan—sustain—till life returns anew;
Awake her handmaids, with the matrons leave
That fainting form o'er which they gaze and grieve;
Then seek Anselmo's cavern, to report
The tale too tedious—when the triumph short.

IV.

In that wild council words waxed warm and strange,
With thoughts of ransom, rescue, and revenge;
All, save repose or flight: still lingering there
Breathed Conrad's spirit, and forbade despair;
Whate'er his fate—the breasts he formed and led,
Will save him living, or appease him dead.
Woe to his foes! there yet survive a few,
Whose deeds are daring, as their hearts are true.

V.

Within the Haram's secret chamber sate
Stern Seyd, still pondering o'er his Captive's fate;
His thoughts on love and hate alternate dwell,
Now with Gulnare, and now in Conrad's cell;
Here at his feet the lovely slave reclined
Surveys his brow—would soothe his gloom of mind,
While many an anxious glance her large dark eye
Sends in its idle search for sympathy,

His only bends in seeming o'er his beads,[15]
But inly views his victim as he bleeds.

“ Pacha! the day is thine; and on thy crest
“ Sits Triumph—Conrad taken—fall'n the rest!
“ His doom is fixed—he dies: and well his fate
“ Was earned—yet much too worthless for thy hate:
“ Methinks, a short release, for ransom told
“ With all his treasure, not unwisely sold;
“ Report speaks largely of his pirate-hoard—
“ Would that of this my Pacha were the Lord!
“ While baffled, weakened by this fatal fray—
“ Watched—followed—he were then an easier prey;
“ But once cut off—the remnant of his band
“ Embark their wealth, and seek a safer strand.”

“ Gulnare!—if for each drop of blood a gem
“ Were offered rich as Stamboul's diadem;

" If for each hair of his a massy mine
" Of virgin ore should supplicating shine;
" If all our Arab tales divulge or dream
" Of wealth were here—that gold should not redeem!
" It had not now redeemed a single hour;
" But that I know him fettered, in my power;
" And, thirsting for revenge, I ponder still
" On pangs that longest rack, and latest kill."

" Nay, Seyd!—I seek not to restrain thy rage,
" Too justly moved for mercy to assuage;
" My thoughts were only to secure for thee
" His riches—thus released, he were not free:
" Disabled, shorn of half his might and band,
" His capture could but wait thy first command."

" His capture *could!*—and shall I then resign
" One day to him—the wretch already mine?
" Release my foe!—at whose remonstrance?—thine!

"Fair suitor!—to thy virtuous gratitude,
"That thus repays this Giaour's relenting mood,
"Which thee and thine alone of all could spare,
"No doubt—regardless if the prize were fair,
"My thanks and praise alike are due—now hear!
"I have a counsel for thy gentler ear:
"I do mistrust thee, woman! and each word
"Of thine stamps truth on all Suspicion heard.
"Borne in his arms through fire from yon Serai—
"Say, wert thou lingering there with him to fly?
"Thou need'st not answer—thy confession speaks,
"Already reddening on thy guilty cheeks;
"Then, lovely dame, bethink thee! and beware:
"'Tis not *his* life alone may claim such care!
"Another word and—nay—I need no more.
"Accursed was the moment when he bore
"Thee from the flames, which better far—but—no—
"I then had mourned thee with a lover's woe—

"Now 'tis thy lord that warns—deceitful thing!
"Know'st thou that I can clip thy wanton wing?
"In words alone I am not wont to chafe:
"Look to thyself—nor deem thy falsehood safe!"

He rose—and slowly, sternly thence withdrew,
Rage in his eye and threats in his adieu:
Ah! little recked that chief of womanhood—
Which frowns ne'er quelled, nor menaces subdued;
And little deemed he what thy heart, Gulnare!
When soft could feel, and when incensed could dare.
His doubts appeared to wrong—nor yet she knew
How deep the root from whence compassion grew—
She was a slave—from such may captives claim
A fellow-feeling, differing but in name;
Still half unconscious—heedless of his wrath,
Again she ventured on the dangerous path,
Again his rage repelled—until arose
That strife of thought, the source of woman's woes!

VI.

Meanwhile—long anxious—weary—still—the same
Rolled day and night—his soul could terror tame—
This fearful interval of doubt and dread,
When every hour might doom him worse than dead,
When every step that echoed by the gate,
Might entering lead where axe and stake await;
When every voice that grated on his ear
Might be the last that he could ever hear;
Could terror tame—that spirit stern and high
Had proved unwilling as unfit to die;
'Twas worn—perhaps decayed—yet silent bore
That conflict deadlier far than all before:
The heat of fight, the hurry of the gale,
Leave scarce one thought inert enough to quail;
But bound and fixed in fettered solitude,
To pine, the prey of every changing mood;
To gaze on thine own heart; and meditate
Irrevocable faults, and coming fate—

Too late the last to shun—the first to mend—
To count the hours that struggle to thine end,
With not a friend to animate, and tell
To other ears that death became thee well;
Around thee foes to forge the ready lie,
And blot life's latest scene with calumny;
Before thee tortures, which the soul can dare,
Yet doubts how well the shrinking flesh may bear;
But deeply feels a single cry would shame,
To valour's praise thy last and dearest claim;
The life thou leav'st below, denied above
By kind monopolists of heavenly love;
And more than doubtful paradise—thy heaven
Of earthly hope—thy loved one from thee riven.
Such were the thoughts that outlaw must sustain,
And govern pangs surpassing mortal pain:
And those sustained he—boots it well or ill?
Since not to sink beneath, is something still!

VII.

The first day passed—he saw not her—Gulnare—
The second—third—and still she came not there;
But what her words avouched, her charms had done,
Or else he had not seen another sun.
The fourth day rolled along, and with the night
Came storm and darkness in their mingling might:
Oh! how he listened to the rushing deep,
That ne'er till now so broke upon his sleep;
And his wild spirit wilder wishes sent,
Roused by the roar of his own element!
Oft had he ridden on that winged wave,
And loved its roughness for the speed it gave;
And now its dashing echoed on his ear,
A long known voice—alas! too vainly near!
Loud sung the wind above; and, doubly loud,
Shook o'er his turret cell the thunder-cloud;
And flashed the lightning by the latticed bar,
To him more genial than the midnight star:

Close to the glimmering grate he dragged his chain,
And hoped *that* peril might not prove in vain.
He raised his iron hand to Heaven, and prayed
One pitying flash to mar the form it made:
His steel and impious prayer attract alike—
The storm rolled onward and disdained to strike;
Its peal waxed fainter—ceased—he felt alone,
As if some faithless friend had spurned his groan!

VIII.

The midnight passed—and to the massy door,
A light step came—it paused—it moved once more;
Slow turns the grating bolt and sullen key:
'Tis as his heart foreboded—that fair she!
Whate'er her sins, to him a guardian saint,
And beauteous still as hermit's hope can paint;
Yet changed since last within that cell she came,
More pale her cheek, more tremulous her frame:

On him she cast her dark and hurried eye 1449
Which spoke before her accents—" thou must die!
" Yes, thou must die—there is but one resource,
" The last—the worst—if torture were not worse."

" Lady! I look to none—my lips proclaim
" What last proclaimed they—Conrad still the same:
" Why should'st thou seek an outlaw's life to spare,
" And change the sentence I deserve to bear?
" Well have I earned—nor here alone—the meed
" Of Seyd's revenge, by many a lawless deed."

" Why should I seek? because—Oh! didst thou not
" Redeem my life from worse than slavery's lot?
" Why should I seek?—hath misery made thee blind
" To the fond workings of a woman's mind!
" And must I say? albeit my heart rebel
" With all that woman feels, but should not tell—

" Because—despite thy crimes—that heart is moved:
" It feared thee—thanked thee—pitied—maddened—
loved.
" Reply not, tell not now thy tale again,
" Thou lov'st another—and I love in vain;
" Though fond as mine her bosom, form more fair,
" I rush through peril which she would not dare.
" If that thy heart to hers were truly dear, 1471
" Were I thine own—thou wert not lonely here:
" An outlaw's spouse—and leave her lord to roam!
" What hath such gentle dame to do with home?
" But speak not now—o'er thine and o'er my head
" Hangs the keen sabre by a single thread;
" If thou hast courage still, and would'st be free,
" Receive this poignard—rise—and follow me!"

" Ay—in my chains! my steps will gently tread,
" With these adornments, o'er each slumbering head!

" Thou hast forgot—is this a garb for flight?
" Or is that instrument more fit for fight?"

" Misdoubting Corsair! I have gained the guard,
" Ripe for revolt, and greedy for reward.
" A single word of mine removes that chain:
" Without some aid how here could I remain?
" Well, since we met, hath sped my busy time,
" If in aught evil, for thy sake the crime:
" The crime—'tis none to punish those of Seyd.
" That hated tyrant, Conrad—he must bleed!
" I see thee shudder—but my soul is changed—
" Wronged—spurned—reviled—and it shall be avenged—
" Accused of what till now my heart disdained—
" Too faithful, though to bitter bondage chained.
" Yes, smile!—but he had little cause to sneer,
" I was not treacherous then—nor thou too dear:

" But he has said it—and the jealous well,
" Those tyrants, teasing, tempting to rebel,
" Deserve the fate their fretting lips foretell.
" I never loved—he bought me—somewhat high—
" Since with me came a heart he could not buy.
" I was a slave unmurmuring; he hath said,
" But for his rescue I with thee had fled.
" 'Twas false thou know'st—but let such augurs rue,
" Their words are omens Insult renders true.
" Nor was thy respite granted to my prayer;
" This fleeting grace was only to prepare
" New torments for thy life, and my despair.
" Mine too he threatens; but his dotage still
" Would fain reserve me for his lordly will:
" When wearier of these fleeting charms and me,
" There yawns the sack—and yonder rolls the sea!
" What, am I then a toy for dotard's play,
" To wear but till the gilding frets away?

" I saw thee—loved thee—owe thee all—would save,
" If but to shew how grateful is a slave.
" But had he not thus menaced fame and life,
" (And well he keeps his oaths pronounced in strife)
" I still had saved thee—but the Pacha spared.
" Now I am all thine own—for all prepared:
" Thou lov'st me not—nor know'st—or but the worst.
" Alas! this love—that hatred are the first—
" Oh! could'st thou prove my truth, thou would'st not start,
" Nor fear the fire that lights an Eastern heart,
" 'Tis now the beacon of thy safety—now
" It points within the port a Mainote prow:
" But in one chamber, where our path must lead,
" There sleeps—he must not wake—the oppressor Seyd!"

" Gulnare—Gulnare—I never felt till now
" My abject fortune, withered fame so low:

"Seyd is mine enemy: had swept my band
"From earth with ruthless but with open hand,
"And therefore came I, in my bark of war,
"To smite the smiter with the scimitar;
"Such is my weapon—not the secret knife—
"Who spares a woman's seeks not slumber's life.
"Thine saved I gladly, Lady, not for this—
"Let me not deem that mercy shewn amiss.
"Now fare thee well—more peace be with thy breast!
"Night wears apace—my last of earthly rest!"

"Rest! Rest! by sunrise must thy sinews shake,
"And thy limbs writhe around the ready stake.
"I heard the order—saw—I will not see—
"If thou wilt perish, I will fall with thee.
"My life—my love—my hatred—all below
"Are on this cast—Corsair! 'tis but a blow!
"Without it flight were idle—how evade
"His sure pursuit? my wrongs too unrepaid,

"My youth disgraced—the long, long wasted years,
"One blow shall cancel with our future fears;
"But since the dagger suits thee less than brand,
"I'll try the firmness of a female hand.
"The guards are gained—one moment all were o'er—
"Corsair! we meet in safety or no more;
"If errs my feeble hand, the morning cloud
"Will hover o'er thy scaffold, and my shroud."

IX.

She turned, and vanished ere he could reply,
But his glance followed far with eager eye;
And gathering, as he could, the links that bound
His form, to curl their length, and curb their sound,
Since bar and bolt no more his steps preclude,
He, fast as fettered limbs allow, pursued.
'Twas dark and winding, and he knew not where
That passage led; nor lamp nor guard were there:

He sees a dusky glimmering—shall he seek
Or shun that ray so indistinct and weak?
Chance guides his steps—a freshness seems to bear
Full on his brow, as if from morning air—
He reached an open gallery—on his eye
Gleamed the last star of night, the clearing sky:
Yet scarcely heeded these—another light
From a lone chamber struck upon his sight.
Towards it he moved, a scarcely closing door
Revealed the ray within, but nothing more.
With hasty step a figure outward past,
Then paused—and turned—and paused—'tis She at last!
No poignard in that hand—nor sign of ill—
"Thanks to that softening heart—she could not kill!"
Again he looked, the wildness of her eye
Starts from the day abrupt and fearfully.

She stopped—threw back her dark far-floating hair,
That nearly veiled her face and bosom fair:
As if she late had bent her leaning head
Above some object of her doubt or dread.
They meet—upon her brow—unknown—forgot—
Her hurrying hand had left—'twas but a spot—
Its hue was all he saw, and scarce withstood—
Oh! slight but certain pledge of crime—'tis blood!

X.

He had seen battle—he had brooded lone 1589
O'er promised pangs to sentenced guilt foreshown;
He had been tempted—chastened—and the chain
Yet on his arms might ever there remain:
But ne'er from strife—captivity—remorse—
From all his feelings in their inmost force—
So thrilled—so shuddered every creeping vein,
As now they froze before that purple stain.

That spot of blood, that light but guilty streak,
Had banished all the beauty from her cheek!
Blood he had viewed—could view unmoved—but then
It flowed in combat, or was shed by men!

XI.

"'Tis done—he nearly waked—but it is done.
"Corsair! he perished—thou art dearly won.
"All words would now be vain—away—away!
"Our bark is tossing—'tis already day.
"The few gained over, now are wholly mine,
"And these thy yet surviving band shall join:
"Anon my voice shall vindicate my hand,
"When once our sail forsakes this hated strand."

XII.

She clapped her hands—and through the gallery pour,
Equipped for flight, her vassals—Greek and Moor;

Silent but quick they stoop, his chains unbind;
Once more his limbs are free as mountain wind!
But on his heavy heart such sadness sate,
As if they there transferred that iron weight.
No words are uttered—at her sign, a door
Reveals the secret passage to the shore;
The city lies behind—they speed, they reach
The glad waves dancing on the yellow beach;
And Conrad following, at her beck, obeyed,
Nor cared he now if rescued or betrayed;
Resistance were as useless as if Seyd
Yet lived to view the doom his ire decreed.

XIII.

Embarked, the sail unfurled, the light breeze blew—
How much had Conrad's memory to review!
Sunk he in contemplation, till the cape
Where last he anchored reared its giant shape.

Ah!—since that fatal night, though brief the time,
Had swept an age of terror, grief, and crime.
As its far shadow frowned above the mast,
He veiled his face, and sorrowed as he past;
He thought of all—Gonsalvo and his band,
His fleeting triumph and his failing hand;
He thought on her afar, his lonely bride:
He turned and saw—Gulnare, the homicide!

XIV.

She watched his features till she could not bear
Their freezing aspect and averted air,
And that strange fierceness foreign to her eye,
Fell quenched in tears, too late to shed or dry.
She knelt beside him and his hand she prest,
" Thou may'st forgive though Alla's self detest;
" But for that deed of darkness what wert thou?
" Reproach me—but not yet—Oh! spare me *now!*

"I am not what I seem—this fearful night
"My brain bewildered—do not madden quite!
"If I had never loved—though less my guilt,
"Thou hadst not lived to—hate me—if thou wilt."

XV.

She wrongs his thoughts, they more himself upbraid
Than her, though undesigned, the wretch he made;
But speechless all, deep, dark, and unexprest,
They bleed within that silent cell—his breast.
Still onward, fair the breeze, nor rough the surge,
The blue waves sport around the stern they urge;
Far on the horizon's verge appears a speck,
A spot—a mast—a sail—an armed deck!
Their little bark her men of watch descry,
And ampler canvas woos the wind from high;
She bears her down majestically near,
Speed on her prow, and terror in her tier;

A flash is seen—the ball beyond their bow
Booms harmless, hissing to the deep below.
Uprose keen Conrad from his silent trance,
A long, long absent gladness in his glance;
"'Tis mine—my blood-red flag! again—again—
"I am not all deserted on the main!"
They own the signal, answer to the hail,
Hoist out the boat at once, and slacken sail.
"'Tis Conrad! Conrad!" shouting from the deck,
Command nor duty could their transport check!
With light alacrity and gaze of pride,
They view him mount once more his vessel's side;
A smile relaxing in each rugged face,
Their arms can scarce forbear a rough embrace.
He, half forgetting danger and defeat,
Returns their greeting as a chief may greet,
Wrings with a cordial grasp Anselmo's hand,
And feels he yet can conquer and command!

XVI.

These greetings o'er, the feelings that o'erflow,
Yet grieve to win him back without a blow;
They sailed prepared for vengeance—had they known
A woman's hand secured that deed her own,
She were their queen—less scrupulous are they
Than haughty Conrad how they win their way.
With many an asking smile, and wondering stare,
They whisper round, and gaze upon Gulnare;
And her, at once above—beneath her sex,
Whom blood appalled not, their regards perplex.
To Conrad turns her faint imploring eye,
She drops her veil, and stands in silence by;
Her arms are meekly folded on that breast,
Which—Conrad safe—to fate resigned the rest.
Though worse than phrenzy could that bosom fill,
Extreme in love or hate, in good or ill,
The worst of crimes had left her woman still!

XVII.

This Conrad marked, and felt—ah! could he less?
Hate of that deed—but grief for her distress;
What she has done no tears can wash away,
And heaven must punish on its angry day:
But—it was done: he knew, whate'er her guilt,
For him that poignard smote, that blood was spilt;
And he was free!—and she for him had given
Her all on earth, and more than all in heaven!
And now he turned him to that dark-eyed slave
Whose brow was bowed beneath the glance he gave,
Who now seemed changed and humbled:—faint and meek,
But varying oft the colour of her cheek
To deeper shades of paleness—all it's red
That fearful spot which stained it from the dead!
He took that hand—it trembled—now too late—
So soft in love—so wildly nerved in hate;

He clasped that hand—it trembled—and his own
Had lost its firmness, and his voice its tone.
"Gulnare!"—but she replied not—"dear Gulnare!"
She raised her eye—her only answer there—
At once she sought and sunk in his embrace:
If he had driven her from that resting place,
His had been more or less than mortal heart,
But—good or ill—it bade her not depart.
Perchance, but for the bodings of his breast,
His latest virtue then had joined the rest.
Yet even Medora might forgive the kiss
That asked from form so fair no more than this,
The first, the last that Frailty stole from Faith—
To lips where Love had lavished all his breath,
To lips—whose broken sighs such fragrance fling,
As he had fanned them freshly with his wing!

XVIII.

They gain by twilight's hour their lonely isle.
To them the very rocks appear to smile;
The haven hums with many a cheering sound,
The beacons blaze their wonted stations round,
The boats are darting o'er the curly bay,
And sportive dolphins bend them through the spray;
Even the hoarse sea-bird's shrill, discordant shriek,
Greets like the welcome of his tuneless beak!
Beneath each lamp that through its lattice gleams,
Their fancy paints the friends that trim the beams.
Oh! what can sanctify the joys of home,
Like Hope's gay glance from Ocean's troubled foam?

XIX.

The lights are high on beacon and from bower,
And midst them Conrad seeks Medora's tower:
He looks in vain—'tis strange—and all remark,
Amid so many, hers alone is dark.

'Tis strange—of yore its welcome never failed,
Nor now, perchance, extinguished, only veiled.
With the first boat descends he for the shore,
And looks impatient on the lingering oar.
Oh! for a wing beyond the falcon's flight,
To bear him like an arrow to that height!
With the first pause the resting rowers gave,
He waits not—looks not—leaps into the wave,
Strives through the surge, bestrides the beach, and high
Ascends the path familiar to his eye.

He reached his turret door—he paused—no sound
Broke from within; and all was night around.
He knocked, and loudly—footstep nor reply
Announced that any heard or deemed him nigh;
He knocked—but faintly—for his trembling hand
Refused to aid his heavy heart's demand.

The portal opens—'tis a well known face—
But not the form he panted to embrace.
Its lips are silent—twice his own essayed,
And failed to frame the question they delayed;
He snatched the lamp—its light will answer all—
It quits his grasp, expiring in the fall.
He would not wait for that reviving ray—
As soon could he have lingered there for day;
But, glimmering through the dusky corridore,
Another chequers o'er the shadowed floor;
His steps the chamber gain—his eyes behold
All that his heart believed not—yet foretold!

XX.

He turned not—spoke not—sunk not—fixed his look,
And set the anxious frame that lately shook:
He gazed—how long we gaze despite of pain,
And know, but dare not own, we gaze in vain!

In life itself she was so still and fair,
That death with gentler aspect withered there;
And the cold flowers[16] her colder hand contained,
In that last grasp as tenderly were strained
As if she scarcely felt, but feigned a sleep,
And made it almost mockery yet to weep:
The long dark lashes fringed her lids of snow,
And veiled—thought shrinks from all that lurked below—
Oh! o'er the eye death most exerts his might,
And hurls the spirit from her throne of light!
Sinks those blue orbs in that long last eclipse,
But spares, as yet, the charm around her lips—
Yet, yet they seem as they forbore to smile,
And wished repose—but only for a while;
But the white shroud, and each extended tress,
Long—fair—but spread in utter lifelessness,
Which, late the sport of every summer wind,
Escaped the baffled wreath that strove to bind;

These—and the pale pure cheek, became the bier—
But she is nothing—wherefore is he here?

XXI.

He asked no question—all were answered now
By the first glance on that still—marble brow.
It was enough—she died—what recked it how?
The love of youth, the hope of better years,
The source of softest wishes, tenderest fears,
The only living thing he could not hate,
Was reft at once—and he deserved his fate,
But did not feel it less;—the good explore,
For peace, those realms where guilt can never soar:
The proud—the wayward—who have fixed below
Their joy—and find this earth enough for woe,
Lose in that one their all—perchance a mite—
But who in patience parts with all delight?
Full many a stoic eye and aspect stern
Mask hearts where grief hath little left to learn;

And many a withering thought lies hid, not lost,
In smiles that least befit who wear them most.

XXII.

By those, that deepest feel, is ill exprest
The indistinctness of the suffering breast;
Where thousand thoughts begin to end in one,
Which seeks from all the refuge found in none;
No words suffice the secret soul to show,
For Truth denies all eloquence to Woe.
On Conrad's stricken soul exhaustion prest,
And stupor almost lulled it into rest;
So feeble now—his mother's softness crept
To those wild eyes, which like an infant's wept:
It was the very weakness of his brain,
Which thus confessed without relieving pain.
None saw his trickling tears—perchance, if seen,
That useless flood of grief had never been:

Nor long they flowed—he dried them to depart,
In helpless—hopeless—brokenness of heart:
The sun goes forth—but Conrad's day is dim;
And the night cometh—ne'er to pass from him.
There is no darkness like the cloud of mind,
On Grief's vain eye—the blindest of the blind!
Which may not—dare not see—but turns aside
To blackest shade—nor will endure a guide!

XXIII.

His heart was formed for softness—warped to wrong;
Betrayed too early, and beguiled too long;
Each feeling pure—as falls the dropping dew
Within the grot; like that had hardened too;
Less clear, perchance, its earthly trials passed,
But sunk, and chilled, and petrified at last.
Yet tempests wear, and lightning cleaves the rock;
If such his heart, so shattered it the shock.

There grew one flower beneath its rugged brow,
Though dark the shade—it sheltered,—saved till now.
The thunder came—that bolt hath blasted both,
The Granite's firmness, and the Lily's growth:
The gentle plant hath left no leaf to tell
Its tale, but shrunk and withered where it fell,
And of its cold protector, blacken round
But shivered fragments on the barren ground!

XXIV.

'Tis morn—to venture on his lonely hour
Few dare; though now Anselmo sought his tower.
He was not there—nor seen along the shore; 1851
Ere night, alarmed, their isle is traversed o'er:
Another morn—another bids them seek,
And shout his name till echo waxeth weak;

Mount—grotto—cavern—valley searched in vain,
They find on shore a sea-boat's broken chain:
Their hope revives—they follow o'er the main.
'Tis idle all—moons roll on moons away,
And Conrad comes not—came not since that day:
Nor trace, nor tidings of his doom declare
Where lives his grief, or perished his despair!
Long mourned his band whom none could mourn beside;
And fair the monument they gave his bride:
For him they raise not the recording stone—
His death yet dubious, deeds too widely known;
He left a Corsair's name to other times,
Linked with one virtue, and a thousand crimes.

NOTES

TO

THE CORSAIR.

The time in this poem may seem too short for the occurrences, but the whole of the Ægean isles are within a few hours sail of the continent, and the reader must be kind enough to take the *wind* as I have often found it.

Note 1, page 36, line 4.

Of fair Olympia loved and left of old.

Orlando, Canto 10.

Note 2, page 43, line 16.

Around the waves' phosphoric brightness broke.

By night, particularly in a warm latitude, every stroke of the oar, every motion of the boat or ship, is followed by a slight flash like sheet lightning from the water.

Note 3, page 49, line 5.

Though to the rest the sober berry's juice.

Coffee.

Note 4, page 49, line 7.

The long Chibouque's dissolving cloud supply.

Pipe.

Note 5, page 49, line 8.

While dance the Almas to wild minstrelsy.

Dancing-girls.

Note to Canto II. page 50, line 5.

It has been objected that Conrad's entering disguised as a spy is out of nature.—Perhaps so. I find something not unlike it in history.

"Anxious to explore with his own eyes the state of the Vandals, Majorian ventured, after disguising the colour of his hair, to visit Carthage in the character of his own ambassador; and Genseric was afterwards mortified by the discovery, that he had entertained and dismissed the Emperor of the Romans. Such an anecdote may be rejected as an improbable fiction; but it is a fiction which would not have been imagined unless in the life of a hero." *Gibbon, D. and F. Vol.* VI. *p.* 180.

That Conrad is a character not altogether out of nature I shall attempt to prove by some historical coincidences which I have met with since writing "The Corsair."

"Eccelin prisonnier" dit Rolandini, "s'enfermoit dans un silence menaçant, il fixoit sur la terre son visage feroce, et ne donnoit point d'essor à sa profonde indignation.—De toutes

partes cependant les soldats & les peuples accouroient; ils vouloient voir cet homme, jadis si puissant, et la joie universelle eclatoit de toutes parts.

* * * * * *

" Eccelin etoit d'une petite taille; mais tout l'aspect de sa personne, tous ses mouvemens indiquoient un soldat.—Son langage etoit amer, son deportment superbe—et par son seul egard, il faisoit trembler les plus hardis." Sismondi, tome III. page 219, 220.

" Gizericus (Genseric, king of the Vandals, the conqueror of both Carthage and Rome,) statura mediocris, et equi casu claudicans, animo profundus, sermone rarus, luxuriæ contemptor, irâ turbidus, habendi cupidus, ad solicitandas gentes providentissimus," &c. &c. *Jornandes de Rebus Getius*, c. 33.

I beg leave to quote these gloomy realities to keep in countenance my Giaour and Corsair.

Note 6, page 54, line 17.

And my stern vow and order's laws oppose.

The Dervises are in colleges, and of different orders, as the monks.

Note 7, page 56, last line.

They seize that Dervise!—seize on Zatanai!

Satan.

Note 8, page 58, line 4.

He tore his beard, and foaming fled the fight.

A common and not very novel effect of Mussulman anger. See Prince Eugene's Memoirs, page 24. "The Seraskier "received a wound in the thigh; he plucked up his beard "by the roots, because he was obliged to quit the field."

Note 9, page 60, line 13.

Brief time had Conrad now to greet Gulnare.

Gulnare, a female name; it means, literally, the flower of the Pomegranate.

Note 10, page 74, line 8.

Till even the scaffold echoes with their jest!

In Sir Thomas More, for instance, on the scaffold, and Anne Boleyn in the Tower, when grasping her neck, she remarked, that it "was too slender to trouble the headsman much." During one part of the French Revolution, it became a fashion to leave some "mot" as a legacy; and the quantity of facetious last words spoken during that period would form a melancholy jest-book of a considerable size.

Note 11, page 84, line 14.

That closed their murdered sage's latest day!

Socrates drank the hemlock a short time before sunset (the hour of execution), notwithstanding the entreaties of his disciples to wait till the sun went down.

Note 12, page 85, line 10.

The queen of night asserts her silent reign.

The twilight in Greece is much shorter than in our own country; the days in winter are longer, but in summer of shorter duration.

Note 13, page 86, line 2.

The gleaming turret of the gay Kiosk.

The Kiosk is a Turkish summer-house; the palm is without the present walls of Athens, not far from the temple of Theseus, between which and the tree the wall intervenes.—Cephisus' stream is indeed scanty, and Ilissus has no stream at all.

Note 14, page 86, line 12.

That frown where gentler ocean seems to smile.

The opening lines as far as section II. have, perhaps, little business here, and were annexed to an unpublished (though printed) poem; but they were written on the spot in the Spring of 1811, and—I scarce know why—the reader must excuse their appearance here if he can.

Note 15, page 92, line 1.

His only bends in seeming o'er his beads.

The Comboloio, or Mahometan rosary; the beads are in number ninety-nine.

Note 16, page 120, line 3.

And the cold flowers her colder hand contained.

In the Levant it is the custom to strew flowers on the bodies of the dead, and in the hands of young persons to place a nosegay.

Note 17, page 125, last line.

Linked with one virtue, and a thousand crimes.

That the point of honour which is represented in one instance of Conrad's character has not been carried beyond the bounds of probability may perhaps be in some degree confirmed by the following anecdote of a brother buccaneer in the present year, 1814.

Our readers have all seen the account of the enterprise against the pirates of Barrataria; but few, we believe, were informed of the situation, history, or nature of that establishment. For the information of such as were unacquainted with it, we have procured from a friend the following interesting narrative of the main facts, of which he has personal knowledge, and which cannot fail to interest some of our readers.

Barrataria is a bay, or a narrow arm of the gulf of Mexico: it runs through a rich but very flat country, until it reaches within a mile of the Mississippi river, fifteen miles below the city of New Orleans. The bay has branches

almost innumerable, in which persons can lie concealed from the severest scrutiny. It communicates with three lakes which lie on the southwest side, and these, with the lake of the same name, and which lies contiguous to the sea, where there is an island formed by the two arms of this lake and the sea. The east and west points of this island were fortified in the year 1811, by a band of pirates, under the command of one Monsieur La Fitte. A large majority of these outlaws are of that class of the population of the state of Louisiana who fled from the island of St. Domingo during the troubles there, and took refuge in the island of Cuba: and when the last war between France and Spain commenced, they were compelled to leave that island with the short notice of a few days. Without ceremony, they entered the United States, the most of them the State of Louisiana, with all the negroes they had possessed in Cuba. They were notified by the Governor of that State of the clause in the constitution which forbad the importation of slaves; but, at the same time, received the assurance of the Governor that he would obtain, if possible, the approbation of the general Government for their retaining this property.

The Island of Barrataria is situated about lat. 29 deg. 15 min. lon. 92 30. and is as remarkable for its health as for the superior scale and shell fish with which its waters abound. The chief of this horde, like Charles de Moor, had mixed with his many vices some virtues. In the year

1813, this party had, from its turpitude and boldness, claimed the attention of the Governor of Louisiana; and to break up the establishment, he thought proper to strike at the head. He therefore offered a reward of 500 dollars for the head of Monsieur La Fitte, who was well known to the inhabitants of the city of New Orleans, from his immediate connexion, and his once having been a fencing-master in that city of great reputation, which art he learnt in Buonaparte's army, where he was a Captain. The reward which was offered by the Governor for the head of La Fitte was answered by the offer of a reward from the latter of 15,000 for the head of the Governor. The Governor ordered out a company to march from the city to La Fitte's island, and to burn and destroy all the property, and to bring to the city of New Orleans all his banditti. This company, under the command of a man who had been the intimate associate of this bold Captain, approached very near to the fortified island, before he saw a man, or heard a sound, until he heard a whistle, not unlike a boatswain's call. Then it was he found himself surrounded by armed men who had emerged from the secret avenues which led into Bayou. Here it was that the modern Charles de Moor developed his few noble traits; for to this man who had come to destroy his life and all that was dear to him, he not only spared his life, but offered him that which would have made the honest soldier easy or the remainder of his days, which was indignantly

refused. He then, with the approbation of his captor, returned to the city. This circumstance, and some concomitant events, proved that this band of pirates was not to be taken by land. Our naval force having always been small in that quarter, exertions for the destruction of this illicit establishment could not be expected from them until augmented; for an officer of the navy, with most of the gun-boats on that station, had to retreat from an overwhelming force of La Fitte's. So soon as the augmentation of the navy authorised an attack, one was made; the overthrow of this banditti has been the result; and now this almost invulnerable point and key to New Orleans is clear of an enemy, it is to be hoped the government will hold it by a strong military force.—*From an American Newspaper.*

In Noble's continuation of Granger's Biographical Dictionary, there is a singular passage in his account of archbishop Blackbourne, and as in some measure connected with the profession of the hero of the foregoing poem, I cannot resist the temptation of extracting it.

"There is something mysterious in the history and character of Dr. Blackbourne. The former is but imperfectly "known; and report has even asserted he was a buccaneer: "and that one of his brethren in that profession having asked, "on his arrival in England, what had become of his old chum, "Blackbourne, was answered, he is archbishop of York. We "are informed, that Blackbourne was installed sub-dean of

" Exeter, in 1694, which office he resigned in 1702; but after " his successor, Lewis Barnet's death, in 1704, he regained it. " In the following year he became dean; and, in 1714, held " with it the archdeanery of Cornwall. He was consecrated " bishop of Exeter, February 24, 1716; and translated to " York, November 28, 1724, as a reward, according to court " scandal, for uniting George I. to the Duchess of Munster. " This, however, appears to have been an unfounded calumny. " As archbishop he behaved with great prudence, and was " equally respectable as the guardian of the revenues of the " see. Rumour whispered he retained the vices of his youth, " and that a passion for the fair sex formed an item in the list " of his weaknesses; but so far from being convicted by seventy " witnesses, he does not appear to have been directly cri-" minated by one. In short, I look upon these aspersions as " the effects of mere malice. How is it possible a buccaneer " should have been so good a scholar as Blackbourne certainly " was: he who had so perfect a knowledge of the classics, " (particularly of the Greek tragedians,) as to be able to read " them with the same ease as he could Shakespeare, must have " taken great pains to acquire the learned languages; and " have had both leisure and good masters. But he was un-" doubtedly educated at Christ-church College, Oxford. He " is allowed to have been a pleasant man: this, however, was " turned against him, by its being said, 'he gained more " 'hearts than souls.'"

" The only voice that could soothe the passions of the " savage (Alphonso 3d) was that of an amiable and virtuous " wife, the sole object of his love; the voice of Donna Isa- " bella, the daughter of the Duke of Savoy, and the grand- " daughter of Philip 2d, King of Spain.—Her dying words " sunk deep into his memory; his fierce spirit melted into " tears; and after the last embrace, Alphonso retired into " his chamber to bewail his irreparable loss, and to meditate " on the vanity of human life."—*Miscellaneous Works of Gibbon, New Edition, 8vo. vol. 3, page* 473.

LARA,

A TALE.

LARA.

CANTO I.

I.

The Serfs are glad through Lara's wide domain,
And Slavery half forgets her feudal chain;
He, their unhoped, but unforgotten lord,
The long self-exiled chieftain is restored:
There be bright faces in the busy hall,
Bowls on the board, and banners on the wall;
Far chequering o'er the pictured window, plays
The unwonted faggots' hospitable blaze;
And gay retainers gather round the hearth,
With tongues all loudness, and with eyes all mirth.

II.

The chief of Lara is returned again:
And why had Lara crossed the bounding main?
Left by his sire, too young such loss to know,
Lord of himself;—that heritage of woe,
That fearful empire which the human breast
But holds to rob the heart within of rest!—
With none to check, and few to point in time
The thousand paths that slope the way to crime;
Then, when he most required commandment, then
Had Lara's daring boyhood governed men.
It skills not, boots not step by step to trace
His youth through all the mazes of its race;
Short was the course his restlessness had run,
But long enough to leave him half undone.

III.

And Lara left in youth his father-land;
But from the hour he waved his parting hand

Each trace waxed fainter of his course, till all
Had nearly ceased his memory to recall.
His sire was dust, his vassals could declare,
'Twas all they knew, that Lara was not there;
Nor sent, nor came he, till conjecture grew
Cold in the many, anxious in the few.
His hall scarce echoes with his wonted name,
His portrait darkens in its fading frame,
Another chief consoled his destined bride,
The young forgot him, and the old had died;
"Yet doth he live!" exclaims the impatient heir,
And sighs for sables which he must not wear.
A hundred scutcheons deck with gloomy grace
The Laras' last and longest dwelling place;
But one is absent from the mouldering file,
That now were welcome in that Gothic pile.

IV.

He comes at last in sudden loneliness,
And whence they know not, why they need not guess;
They more might marvel, when the greeting's o'er,
Not that he came, but came not long before:
No train is his beyond a single page,
Of foreign aspect, and of tender age.
Years had rolled on, and fast they speed away
To those that wander as to those that stay;
But lack of tidings from another clime
Had lent a flagging wing to weary Time.
They see, they recognise, yet almost deem
The present dubious, or the past a dream.

He lives, nor yet is past his manhood's prime,
Though seared by toil, and something touched by time;
His faults, whate'er they were, if scarce forgot,
Might be untaught him by his varied lot;

Nor good nor ill of late were known, his name
Might yet uphold his patrimonial fame:
His soul in youth was haughty, but his sins
No more than pleasure from the stripling wins;
And such, if not yet hardened in their course,
Might be redeemed, nor ask a long remorse.

V.

And *they* indeed were changed—'tis quickly seen
Whate'er *he* be, 'twas not what he had been:
That brow in furrowed lines had fixed at last,
And spake of passions, but of passion past:
The pride, but not the fire, of early days,
Coldness of mien, and carelessness of praise;
A high demeanour, and a glance that took
Their thoughts from others by a single look;
And that sarcastic levity of tongue,
The stinging of a heart the world hath stung,

That darts in seeming playfulness around,
And makes those feel that will not own the wound;
All these seemed his, and something more beneath,
Than glance could well reveal, or accent breathe.
Ambition, glory, love, the common aim,
That some can conquer, and that all would claim,
Within his breast appeared no more to strive,
Yet seemed as lately they had been alive;
And some deep feeling it were vain to trace
At moments lightened o'er his livid face.

VI.

Not much he loved long question of the past,
Nor told of wondrous wilds, and desarts vast,
In those far lands where he had wandered lone,
And—as himself would have it seem—unknown:
Yet these in vain his eye could scarcely scan,
Nor glean experience from his fellow man;

But what he had beheld he shunned to show,
As hardly worth a stranger's care to know;
If still more prying such enquiry grew,
His brow fell darker, and his words more few.

VII.

Not unrejoiced to see him once again,
Warm was his welcome to the haunts of men;
Born of high lineage, linked in high command,
He mingled with the Magnates of his land;
Joined the carousals of the great and gay,
And saw them smile or sigh their hours away;
But still he only saw, and did not share
The common pleasure or the general care;
He did not follow what they all pursued
With hope still baffled, still to be renewed;
Nor shadowy honour, nor substantial gain,
Nor beauty's preference, and the rival's pain:

Around him some mysterious circle thrown
Repelled approach, and showed him still alone;
Upon his eye sate something of reproof,
That kept at least frivolity aloof;
And things more timid that beheld him near,
In silence gazed, or whispered mutual fear;
And they the wiser, friendlier few confest
They deemed him better than his air exprest.

VIII.

'Twas strange—in youth all action and all life,
Burning for pleasure, not averse from strife;
Woman—the field—the ocean—all that gave
Promise of gladness, peril of a grave,
In turn he tried—he ransacked all below,
And found his recompence in joy or woe,
No tame, trite medium; for his feelings sought
In that intenseness an escape from thought:

The tempest of his heart in scorn had gazed
On that the feebler elements hath raised;
The rapture of his heart had looked on high,
And asked if greater dwelt beyond the sky:
Chained to excess, the slave of each extreme,
How woke he from the wildness of that dream?
Alas! he told not—but he did awake
To curse the withered heart that would not break.

IX.

Books, for his volume heretofore was Man, 131
With eye more curious he appeared to scan,
And oft, in sudden mood, for many a day
From all communion he would start away:
And then, his rarely called attendants said,
Through night's long hours would sound his hurried tread
O'er the dark gallery, where his fathers frowned
In rude but antique portraiture around:

They heard, but whispered—"*that* must not be known—
"The sound of words less earthly than his own.
"Yes, they who chose might smile, but some had seen
"They scarce knew what, but more than should have been.
"Why gazed he so upon the ghastly head
"Which hands profane had gathered from the dead,
"That still beside his opened volume lay,
"As if to startle all save him away?
"Why slept he not when others were at rest?
"Why heard no music, and received no guest?
"All was not well they deemed—but where the wrong?
"Some knew perchance—but 'twere a tale too long;
"And such besides were too discreetly wise,
"To more than hint their knowledge in surmise;
"But if they would—they could"—around the board,
Thus Lara's vassals prattled of their lord.

X.

It was the night—and Lara's glassy stream
The stars are studding, each with imaged beam:
So calm, the waters scarcely seem to stray,
And yet they glide like happiness away;
Reflecting far and fairy-like from high
The immortal lights that live along the sky:
Its banks are fringed with many a goodly tree,
And flowers the fairest that may feast the bee;
Such in her chaplet infant Dian wove,
And Innocence would offer to her love.
These deck the shore; the waves their channel make
In windings bright and mazy like the snake.
All was so still, so soft in earth and air,
You scarce would start to meet a spirit there;
Secure that nought of evil could delight
To walk in such a scene, on such a night!
It was a moment only for the good:
So Lara deemed, nor longer there he stood,

But turned in silence to his castle-gate;
Such scene his soul no more could contemplate:
Such scene reminded him of other days,
Of skies more cloudless, moons of purer blaze,
Of nights more soft and frequent, hearts that now—
No—no—the storm may beat upon his brow,
Unfelt—unsparing—but a night like this,
A night of beauty, mocked such breast as his.

XI.

He turned within his solitary hall,
And his high shadow shot along the wall;
There were the painted forms of other times,
'Twas all they left of virtues or of crimes,
Save vague tradition; and the gloomy vaults
That hid their dust, their foibles, and their faults;
And half a column of the pompous page,
That speeds the specious tale from age to age;
Where history's pen its praise or blame supplies,
And lies like truth, and still most truly lies.

He wandering mused, and as the moonbeam shone
Through the dim lattice o'er the floor of stone,
And the high fretted roof, and saints, that there
O'er Gothic windows knelt in pictured prayer,
Reflected in fantastic figures grew,
Like life, but not like mortal life, to view;
His bristling locks of sable, brow of gloom,
And the wide waving of his shaken plume,
Glanced like a spectre's attributes, and gave
His aspect all that terror gives the grave.

XII.

'Twas midnight—all was slumber; the lone light
Dimmed in the lamp, as loth to break the night.
Hark! there be murmurs heard in Lara's hall—
A sound—a voice—a shriek—a fearful call!
A long, loud shriek—and silence—did they hear
That frantic echo burst the sleeping ear?

They heard and rose, and tremulously brave
Rush where the sound invoked their aid to save;
They come with half-lit tapers in their hands,
And snatched in startled haste unbelted brands.

XIII.

Cold as the marble where his length was laid,
Pale as the beam that o'er his features played,
Was Lara stretched; his half drawn sabre near,
Dropped it should seem in more than nature's fear;
Yet he was firm, or had been firm till now,
And still defiance knit his gathered brow;
Though mixed with terror, senseless as he lay,
There lived upon his lip the wish to slay;
Some half formed threat in utterance there had died,
Some imprecation of despairing pride;
His eye was almost sealed, but not forsook,
Even in its trance the gladiator's look,

That oft awake his aspect could disclose,
And now was fixed in horrible repose.
They raise him—bear him;—hush! he breathes, he
speaks,
The swarthy blush recolours in his cheeks,
His lip resumes its red, his eye, though dim,
Rolls wide and wild, each slowly quivering limb
Recalls its function, but his words are strung
In terms that seem not of his native tongue;
Distinct but strange, enough they understand
To deem them accents of another land,
And such they were, and meant to meet an ear
That hears him not—alas! that cannot hear!

XIV.

His page approached, and he alone appeared
To know the import of the words they heard;
And, by the changes of his cheek and brow,
They were not such as Lara should avow,

Nor he interpret, yet with less surprise
Than those around their chieftain's state he eyes,
But Lara's prostrate form he bent beside,
And in that tongue which seemed his own replied,
And Lara heeds those tones that gently seem
To soothe away the horrors of his dream;
If dream it were, that thus could overthrow
A breast that needed not ideal woe.

XV.

Whate'er his phrenzy dreamed or eye beheld,
If yet remembered ne'er to be revealed,
Rests at his heart: the customed morning came,
And breathed new vigour in his shaken frame;
And solace sought he none from priest nor leech,
And soon the same in movement and in speech
As heretofore he filled the passing hours,
Nor less he smiles, nor more his forehead lours

Than these were wont; and if the coming night
Appeared less welcome now to Lara's sight,
He to his marvelling vassals showed it not,
Whose shuddering proved *their* fear was less forgot.
In trembling pairs (alone they dared not) crawl
The astonished slaves, and shun the fated hall;
The waving banner, and the clapping door,
The rustling tapestry, and the echoing floor;
The long dim shadows of surrounding trees,
The flapping bat, the night song of the breeze;
Aught they behold or hear their thought appals,
As evening saddens o'er the dark grey walls.

XVI.

Vain thought! that hour of ne'er unravelled gloom
Came not again, or Lara could assume
A seeming of forgetfulness, that made
His vassals more amazed nor less afraid—

Had memory vanished then with sense restored?
Since word, nor look, nor gesture of their lord
Betrayed a feeling that recalled to these
That fevered moment of his mind's disease.
Was it a dream? was his the voice that spoke
Those strange wild accents; his the cry that broke
Their slumber? his the oppressed o'er-laboured heart
That ceased to beat, the look that made them start?
Could he who thus had suffered, so forget,
When such as saw that suffering shudder yet?
Or did that silence prove his memory fixed
Too deep for words, indelible, unmixed
In that corroding secrecy which gnaws
The heart to show the effect, but not the cause?
Not so in him; his breast had buried both,
Nor common gazers could discern the growth
Of thoughts that mortal lips must leave half told;
They choak the feeble words that would unfold.

XVII.

In him inexplicably mixed appeared
Much to be loved and hated, sought and feared;
Opinion varying o'er his hidden lot,
In praise or railing ne'er his name forgot;
His silence formed a theme for others' prate—
They guessed—they gazed—they fain would know his fate.
What had he been? what was he, thus unknown,
Who walked their world, his lineage only known?
A hater of his kind? yet some would say,
With them he could seem gay amidst the gay;
But owned, that smile if oft observed and near,
Waned in its mirth and withered to a sneer;
That smile might reach his lip, but passed not by,
None e'er could trace its laughter to his eye:
Yet there was softness too in his regard,
At times, a heart as not by nature hard,

But once perceived, his spirit seemed to chide
Such weakness, as unworthy of its pride,
And steeled itself, as scorning to redeem
One doubt from others half withheld esteem;
In self-inflicted penance of a breast
Which tenderness might once have wrung from rest;
In vigilance of grief that would compel
The soul to hate for having loved too well.

XVIII.

There was in him a vital scorn of all:
As if the worst had fall'n which could befall,
He stood a stranger in this breathing world,
An erring spirit from another hurled;
A thing of dark imaginings, that shaped
By choice the perils he by chance escaped;
But 'scaped in vain, for in their memory yet
His mind would half exult and half regret:

With more capacity for love than earth
Bestows on most of mortal mould and birth,
His early dreams of good outstripped the truth,
And troubled manhood followed baffled youth;
With thought of years in phantom chase mispent,
And wasted powers for better purpose lent;
And fiery passions that had poured their wrath
In hurried desolation o'er his path,
And left the better feelings all at strife
In wild reflection o'er his stormy life;
But haughty still, and loth himself to blame,
He called on Nature's self to share the shame,
And charged all faults upon the fleshly form
She gave to clog the soul, and feast the worm;
'Till he at last confounded good and ill,
And half mistook for fate the acts of will:
Too high for common selfishness, he could
At times resign his own for others' good,

But not in pity, not because he ought,
But in some strange perversity of thought,
That swayed him onward with a secret pride
To do what few or none would do beside;
And this same impulse would, in tempting time,
Mislead his spirit equally to crime;
So much he soared beyond, or sunk beneath
The men with whom he felt condemned to breathe,
And longed by good or ill to separate
Himself from all who shared his mortal state;
His mind abhorring this had fixed her throne
Far from the world, in regions of her own:
Thus coldly passing all that passed below,
His blood in temperate seeming now would flow:
Ah! happier if it ne'er with guilt had glowed,
But ever in that icy smoothness flowed!
'Tis true, with other men their path he walked,
And like the rest in seeming did and talked,

Nor outraged Reason's rules by flaw nor start,
His madness was not of the head, but heart;
And rarely wandered in his speech, or drew
His thoughts so forth as to offend the view.

XIX.

With all that chilling mystery of mien,
And seeming gladness to remain unseen;
He had (if 'twere not nature's boon) an art
Of fixing memory on another's heart:
It was not love perchance—nor hate—nor aught
That words can image to express the thought;
But they who saw him did not see in vain,
And once beheld, would ask of him again:
And those to whom he spake remembered well,
And on the words, however light, would dwell:
None knew, nor how, nor why, but he entwined
Himself perforce around the hearer's mind;

There he was stamped, in liking, or in hate,
If greeted once; however brief the date
That friendship, pity, or aversion knew,
Still there within the inmost thought he grew.
You could not penetrate his soul, but found,
Despite your wonder, to your own he wound;
His presence haunted still; and from the breast
He forced an all-unwilling interest:
Vain was the struggle in that mental net,
His spirit seemed to dare you to forget!

XX.

There is a festival, where knights and dames,
And aught that wealth or lofty lineage claims
Appear—a highborn and a welcome guest
To Otho's hall came Lara with the rest.
The long carousal shakes the illumined hall,
Well speeds alike the banquet and the ball;

And the gay dance of bounding Beauty's train
Links grace and harmony in happiest chain:
Blest are the early hearts and gentle hands
That mingle there in well according bands;
It is a sight the careful brow might smoothe,
And make Age smile, and dream itself to youth,
And Youth forget such hour was past on earth,
So springs the exulting bosom to that mirth!

XXI.

And Lara gazed on these, sedately glad,
His brow belied him if his soul was sad;
And his glance followed fast each fluttering fair,
Whose steps of lightness woke no echo there:
He leaned against the lofty pillar nigh,
With folded arms and long attentive eye,
Nor marked a glance so sternly fixed on his,
Ill brooked high Lara scrutiny like this:

At length he caught it, 'tis a face unknown,
But seems as searching his, and his alone;
Prying and dark, a stranger's by his mien,
Who still till now had gazed on him unseen;
At length encountering meets the mutual gaze
Of keen enquiry, and of mute amaze;
On Lara's glance emotion gathering grew,
As if distrusting that the stranger threw;
Along the stranger's aspect fixed and stern,
Flashed more than thence the vulgar eye could learn.

XXII.

"'Tis he!" the stranger cried, and those that heard,
Re-echoed fast and far the whispered word.
"'Tis he!"—"'Tis who?" they question far and near,
Till louder accents rung on Lara's ear;
So widely spread, few bosoms well could brook
The general marvel, or that single look;

But Lara stirred not, changed not, the surprise
That sprung at first to his arrested eyes
Seemed now subsided, neither sunk nor raised
Glanced his eye round, though still the stranger gazed;
And drawing nigh, exclaimed, with haughty sneer,
"'Tis he!—how came he thence?—what doth he here?"

XXIII.

It were too much for Lara to pass by
Such question, so repeated fierce and high;
With look collected, but with accent cold,
More mildly firm than petulantly bold,
He turned, and met the inquisitorial tone—
"My name is Lara!—when thine own is known,
"Doubt not my fitting answer to requite
"The unlooked for courtesy of such a knight.

" 'Tis Lara!—further wouldst thou mark or ask?
" I shun no question, and I wear no mask."

" Thou shun'st no question! Ponder—is there none
" Thy heart must answer, though thine ear would shun?
" And deem'st thou me unknown too? Gaze again!
" At least thy memory was not given in vain.
" Oh! never canst thou cancel half her debt,
" Eternity forbids thee to forget."
With slow and searching glance upon his face
Grew Lara's eyes, but nothing there could trace
They knew, or chose to know—with dubious look
He deigned no answer, but his head he shook,
And half contemptuous turned to pass away;
But the stern stranger motioned him to stay.
" A word!—I charge thee stay, and answer here
" To one, who, wert thou noble, were thy peer,

“ But as thou wast and art—nay, frown not, lord,
“ If false, 'tis easy to disprove the word—
“ But, as thou wast and art, on thee looks down,
“ Distrusts thy smiles, but shakes not at thy frown.
“ Art thou not he? whose deeds——”
“ Whate'er I be,
“ Words wild as these, accusers like to thee
“ I list no further; those with whom they weigh
“ May hear the rest, nor venture to gainsay
“ The wondrous tale no doubt thy tongue can tell,
“ Which thus begins so courteously and well.
“ Let Otho cherish here his polished guest,
“ To him my thanks and thoughts shall be exprest.”
And here their wondering host hath interposed—
“ Whate'er there be between you undisclosed,
“ This is no time nor fitting place to mar
“ The mirthful meeting with a wordy war.

“ If thou, Sir Ezzelin, hast ought to show
“ Which it befits Count Lara's ear to know,
“ To-morrow, here, or elsewhere, as may best
“ Beseem your mutual judgment, speak the rest;
“ I pledge myself for thee, as not unknown,
“ Though like Count Lara now returned alone
“ From other lands, almost a stranger grown;
“ And if from Lara's blood and gentle birth
“ I augur right of courage and of worth,
“ He will not that untainted line belie,
“ Nor aught that knighthood may accord, deny.”

“ To-morrow be it,” Ezzelin replied,
“ And here our several worth and truth be tried;
“ I gage my life, my falchion to attest
“ My words, so may I mingle with the blest!”
What answers Lara? to its centre shrunk
His soul, in deep abstraction sudden sunk;

The words of many, and the eyes of all
That there were gathered, seemed on him to fall;
But his were silent, his appeared to stray
In far forgetfulness away—away—
Alas! that heedlessness of all around
Bespoke remembrance only too profound.

XXIV.

"To-morrow!—ay, to-morrow!" further word
Than those repeated none from Lara heard; 491
Upon his brow no outward passion spoke,
From his large eye no flashing anger broke;
Yet there was something fixed in that low tone,
Which showed resolve, determined, though unknown.
He seized his cloak—his head he slightly bowed,
And passing Ezzelin, he left the crowd;
And, as he passed him, smiling met the frown
With which that chieftain's brow would bear him
down:

It was nor smile of mirth, nor struggling pride
That curbs to scorn the wrath it cannot hide;
But that of one in his own heart secure
Of all that he would do, or could endure.
Could this mean peace? the calmness of the good?
Or guilt grown old in desperate hardihood?
Alas! too like in confidence are each,
For man to trust to mortal look or speech;
From deeds, and deeds alone, may he discern
Truths which it wrings the unpractised heart to learn.

XXV.

And Lara called his page, and went his way—
Well could that stripling word or sign obey:
His only follower from those climes afar,
Where the soul glows beneath a brighter star;
For Lara left the shore from whence he sprung,
In duty patient, and sedate though young;

Silent as him he served, his faith appears
Above his station, and beyond his years.
Though not unknown the tongue of Lara's land,
In such from him he rarely heard command;
But fleet his step, and clear his tones would come,
When Lara's lip breathed forth the words of home:
Those accents as his native mountains dear,
Awake their absent echoes in his ear,
Friends', kindreds', parents', wonted voice recall,
Now lost, abjured, for one—his friend, his all:
For him earth now disclosed no other guide;
What marvel then he rarely left his side?

XXVI.

Light was his form, and darkly delicate
That brow whereon his native sun had sate,
But had not marred, though in his beams he grew,
The cheek where oft the unbidden blush shone through;

Yet not such blush as mounts when health would show
All the heart's hue in that delighted glow ;
But 'twas a hectic tint of secret care
That for a burning moment fevered there ;
And the wild sparkle of his eye seemed caught
From high, and lightened with electric thought,
Though its black orb those long low lashes fringe,
Had tempered with a melancholy tinge ;
Yet less of sorrow than of pride was there,
Or if 'twere grief, a grief that none should share :
And pleased not him the sports that please his age,
The tricks of youth, the frolics of the page,
For hours on Lara he would fix his glance,
As all-forgotten in that watchful trance ;
And from his chief withdrawn, he wandered lone,
Brief were his answers, and his questions none ;
His walk the wood, his sport some foreign book ;
His resting-place the bank that curbs the brook :

He seemed, like him he served, to live apart
From all that lures the eye, and fills the heart;
To know no brotherhood, and take from earth
No gift beyond that bitter boon—our birth.

XXVII.

If aught he loved, 'twas Lara; but was shown
His faith in reverence and in deeds alone;
In mute attention; and his care, which guessed
Each wish, fulfilled it ere the tongue expressed.
Still there was haughtiness in all he did,
A spirit deep that brooked not to be chid;
His zeal, though more than that of servile hands,
In act alone obeys, his air commands;
As if 'twas Lara's less than *his* desire
That thus he served, but surely not for hire.
Slight were the tasks enjoined him by his lord,
To hold the stirrup, or to bear the sword;

To tune his lute, or if he willed it more,
On tomes of other times and tongues to pore;
But ne'er to mingle with the menial train,
To whom he showed nor deference nor disdain,
But that well-worn reserve which proved he knew
No sympathy with that familiar crew:
His soul, whate'er his station or his stem,
Could bow to Lara, not descend to them.
Of higher birth he seemed, and better days,
Nor mark of vulgar toil that hand betrays,
So femininely white it might bespeak
Another sex, when matched with that smooth cheek,
But for his garb, and something in his gaze,
More wild and high than woman's eye betrays;
A latent fierceness that far more became
His fiery climate than his tender frame:
True, in his words it broke not from his breast,
But from his aspect might be more than guest.

Kaled his name, though rumour said he bore
Another ere he left his mountain-shore;
For sometimes he would hear, however nigh,
That name repeated loud without reply,
As unfamiliar, or, if roused again,
Start to the sound, as but remembered then;
Unless 'twas Lara's wonted voice that spake,
For then, ear, eyes, and heart would all awake.

XXVIII.

He had looked down upon the festive hall,
And marked that sudden strife so marked of all;
And when the crowd around and near him told
Their wonder at the calmness of the bold,
Their marvel how the high-born Lara bore
Such insult from a stranger, doubly sore,
The colour of young Kaled went and came,
The lip of ashes, and the cheek of flame;

And o'er his brow the dampening heart-drops threw
The sickening iciness of that cold dew,
That rises as the busy bosom sinks
With heavy thoughts from which reflection shrinks.
Yes—there be things that we must dream and dare,
And execute ere thought be half aware:
Whate'er might Kaled's be, it was enow
To seal his lip, but agonise his brow.
He gazed on Ezzelin till Lara cast
That sidelong smile upon the knight he past;
When Kaled saw that smile his visage fell,
As if on something recognized right well;
His memory read in such a meaning more
Than Lara's aspect unto others wore:
Forward he sprung—a moment, both were gone,
And all within that hall seemed left alone;
Each had so fixed his eye on Lara's mien,
All had so mixed their feelings with that scene,

That when his long dark shadow through the porch
No more relieves the glare of yon high torch,
Each pulse beats quicker, and all bosoms seem
To bound as doubting from too black a dream,
Such as we know is false, yet dread in sooth,
Because the worst is ever nearest truth.
And they are gone—but Ezzelin is there,
With thoughtful visage and imperious air;
But long remained not; ere an hour expired
He waved his hand to Otho, and retired.

XXIX.

The crowd are gone, the revellers at rest;
The courteous host, and all-approving guest,
Again to that accustomed couch must creep
Where joy subsides, and sorrow sighs to sleep,
And man o'er-laboured with his being's strife,
Shrinks to that sweet forgetfulness of life:

There lie love's feverish hope, and cunning's guile,
Hate's working brain, and lulled ambition's wile;
O'er each vain eye oblivion's pinions wave,
And quenched existence crouches in a grave.
What better name may slumber's bed become?
Night's sepulchre, the universal home,
Where weakness, strength, vice, virtue, sunk supine,
Alike in naked helplessness recline; 641
Glad for awhile to heave unconscious breath,
Yet wake to wrestle with the dread of death,
And shun, though day but dawn on ills increast,
That sleep, the loveliest, since it dreams the least.

LARA.

CANTO II.

I.

NIGHT wanes—the vapours round the mountains curled
Melt into morn, and Light awakes the world.
Man has another day to swell the past,
And lead him near to little, but his last;
But mighty Nature bounds as from her birth,
The sun is in the heavens, and life on earth;
Flowers in the valley, splendour in the beam,
Health on the gale, and freshness in the stream.
Immortal man! behold her glories shine,
And cry, exulting inly, "they are thine!"

Gaze on, while yet thy gladdened eye may see;
A morrow comes when they are not for thee:
And grieve what may above thy senseless bier,
Nor earth nor sky will yield a single tear;
Nor cloud shall gather more, nor leaf shall fall,
Nor gale breathe forth one sigh for thee, for all;
But creeping things shall revel in their spoil,
And fit thy clay to fertilize the soil.

II.

'Tis morn—'tis noon—assembled in the hall,
The gathered chieftains come to Otho's call;
'Tis now the promised hour, that must proclaim
The life or death of Lara's future fame;
When Ezzelin his charge may here unfold,
And whatsoe'er the tale, it must be told.
His faith was pledged, and Lara's promise given,
To meet it in the eye of man and heaven.

Why comes he not? Such truths to be divulged,
Methinks the accuser's rest is long indulged.

III.

The hour is past, and Lara too is there,
With self-confiding, coldly patient air;
Why comes not Ezzelin? The hour is past,
And murmurs rise, and Otho's brow's o'ercast.
"I know my friend! his faith I cannot fear,
"If yet he be on earth, expect him here;
"The roof that held him in the valley stands
"Between my own and noble Lara's lands;
"My halls from such a guest had honour gained,
"Nor had Sir Ezzelin his host disdained,
"But that some previous proof forbade his stay,
"And urged him to prepare against to-day;
"The word I pledged for his I pledge again,
"Or will myself redeem his knighthood's stain."

He ceased—and Lara answered, " I am here
" To lend at thy demand a listening ear;
" To tales of evil from a stranger's tongue,
" Whose words already might my heart have wrung,
" But that I deemed him scarcely less than mad,
" Or, at the worst, a foe ignobly bad.
" I know him not—but me it seems he knew
" In lands where—but I must not trifle too:
" Produce this babbler—or redeem the pledge;
" Here in thy hold, and with thy falchion's edge."
Proud Otho on the instant, reddening, threw
His glove on earth, and forth his sabre flew.
" The last alternative befits me best,
" And thus I answer for mine absent guest."
With cheek unchanging from its sallow gloom,
However near his own or other's tomb;
With hand, whose almost careless coolness spoke,
Its grasp well-used to deal the sabre-stroke;

With eye, though calm, determined not to spare,
Did Lara too his willing weapon bare.
In vain the circling chieftains round them closed,
For Otho's phrenzy would not be opposed;
And from his lip those words of insult fell—
His sword is good who can maintain them well.

IV.

Short was the conflict; furious, blindly rash,
Vain Otho gave his bosom to the gash:
He bled, and fell; but not with deadly wound,
Stretched by a dextrous sleight along the ground.
"Demand thy life!" He answered not: and then
From that red floor he ne'er had risen again,
For Lara's brow upon the moment grew
Almost to blackness in its demon hue;
And fiercer shook his angry falchion now
Than when his foe's was levelled at his brow;

Then all was stern collectedness and art,
Now rose the unleavened hatred of his heart;
So little sparing to the foe he felled,
That when the approaching crowd his arm withheld,
He almost turned the thirsty point on those,
Who thus for mercy dared to interpose;
But to a moment's thought that purpose bent;
Yet looked he on him still with eye intent,
As if he loathed the ineffectual strife
That left a foe, howe'er o'erthrown, with life;
As if to search how far the wound he gave
Had sent its victim onward to his grave.

V.

They raised the bleeding Otho, and the Leech
Forbade all present question, sign, and speech;
The others met within a neighbouring hall,
And he, incensed and heedless of them all,

The cause and conqueror in this sudden fray,
In haughty silence slowly strode away;
He backed his steed, his homeward path he took,
Nor cast on Otho's towers a single look.

VI.

But where was he? that meteor of a night,
Who menaced but to disappear with light?
Where was this Ezzelin? who came and went
To leave no other trace of his intent.
He left the dome of Otho long ere morn,
In darkness, yet so well the path was worn
He could not miss it: near his dwelling lay;
But there he was not, and with coming day
Came fast enquiry, which unfolded nought
Except the absence of the chief it sought.
A chamber tenantless, a steed at rest,
His host alarmed, his murmuring squires distrest:

Their search extends along, around the path,
In dread to meet the marks of prowlers' wrath:
But none are there, and not a brake hath borne,
Nor gout of blood, nor shred of mantle torn;
Nor fall nor struggle hath defaced the grass,
Which still retains a mark where murder was;
Nor dabbling fingers left to tell the tale,
The bitter print of each convulsive nail,
When agonized hands that cease to guard,
Wound in that pang the smoothness of the sward.
Some such had been, if here a life was reft,
But these were not; and doubting hope is left;
And strange suspicion whispering Lara's name,
Now daily mutters o'er his blackened fame;
Then sudden silent when his form appeared,
Awaits the absence of the thing it feared
Again its wonted wondering to renew,
And dye conjecture with a darker hue.

VII.

Days roll along, and Otho's wounds are healed,
But not his pride; and hate no more concealed:
He was a man of power, and Lara's foe,
The friend of all who sought to work him woe,
And from his country's justice now demands
Account of Ezzelin at Lara's hands.
Who else than Lara could have cause to fear
His presence? who had made him disappear,
If not the man on whom his menaced charge
Had sate too deeply were he left at large?
The general rumour ignorantly loud,
The mystery dearest to the curious crowd;
The seeming friendlessness of him who strove
To win no confidence, and wake no love;
The sweeping fierceness which his soul betrayed,
The skill with which he wielded his keen blade;

Where had his arm unwarlike caught that art?
Where had that fierceness grown upon his heart?
For it was not the blind capricious rage
A word can kindle and a word assuage;
But the deep working of a soul unmixed
With aught of pity where its wrath had fixed;
Such as long power and overgorged success
Concentrates into all that's merciless:
These, linked with that desire which ever sways
Mankind, the rather to condemn than praise,
'Gainst Lara gathering raised at length a storm,
Such as himself might fear, and foes would form,
And he must answer for the absent head
Of one that haunts him still, alive or dead.

VIII.

Within that land was many a malcontent,
Who cursed the tyranny to which he bent;

That soil full many a wringing despot saw,
Who worked his wantonness in form of law;
Long war without and frequent broil within
Had made a path for blood and giant sin,
That waited but a signal to begin
New havock, such as civil discord blends,
Which knows no neuter, owns but foes or friends;
Fixed in his feudal fortress each was lord,
In word and deed obeyed, in soul abhorred.
Thus Lara had inherited his lands,
And with them pining hearts and sluggish hands;
But that long absence from his native clime
Had left him stainless of oppression's crime,
And now diverted by his milder sway,
All dread by slow degrees had worn away:
The menials felt their usual awe alone,
But more for him than them that fear was grown;
They deemed him now unhappy, though at first
Their evil judgment augured of the worst,

And each long restless night, and silent mood,
Was traced to sickness, fed by solitude:
And though his lonely habits threw of late
Gloom o'er his chamber, cheerful was his gate;
For thence the wretched ne'er unsoothed withdrew,
For them, at least, his soul compassion knew.
Cold to the great, contemptuous to the high,
The humble passed not his unheeding eye;
Much he would speak not, but beneath his roof
They found asylum oft, and ne'er reproof.
And they who watched might mark that day by day,
Some new retainers gathered to his sway;
But most of late, since Ezzelin was lost,
He played the courteous lord and bounteous host:
Perchance his strife with Otho made him dread
Some snare prepared for his obnoxious head;
Whate'er his view, his favour more obtains
With these, the people, than his fellow thanes.

If this were policy, so far 'twas sound,
The million judged but of him as they found;
From him by sterner chiefs to exile driven
They but required a shelter, and 'twas given.
By him no peasant mourned his rifled cot,
And scarce the Serf could murmur o'er his lot;
With him old avarice found its hoard secure,
With him contempt forbore to mock the poor;
Youth present cheer and promised recompence
Detained, till all too late to part from thence:
To hate he offered, with the coming change,
The deep reversion of delayed revenge;
To love, long baffled by the unequal match,
The well-won charms success was sure to snatch.
All now was ripe, he waits but to proclaim
That slavery nothing which was still a name.
The moment came, the hour when Otho thought
Secure at last the vengeance which he sought:

His summons found the destined criminal
Begirt by thousands in his swarming hall,
Fresh from their feudal fetters newly riven,
Defying earth, and confident of heaven.
That morning he had freed the soil-bound slaves
Who dig no land for tyrants but their graves!
Such is their cry—some watchword for the fight
Must vindicate the wrong, and warp the right:
Religion—freedom—vengeance—what you will,
A word's enough to raise mankind to kill;
Some factious phrase by cunning caught and spread,
That guilt may reign, and wolves and worms be fed!

IX.

Throughout that clime the feudal chiefs had gained
Such sway, their infant monarch hardly reigned;
Now was the hour for faction's rebel growth,
The Serfs contemned the one, and hated both:

They waited but a leader, and they found
One to their cause inseparably bound;
By circumstance compelled to plunge again,
In self-defence, amidst the strife of men.
Cut off by some mysterious fate from those
Whom birth and nature meant not for his foes,
Had Lara from that night, to him accurst,
Prepared to meet, but not alone, the worst:
Some reason urged, whate'er it was, to shun
Enquiry into deeds at distance done;
By mingling with his own the cause of all,
E'en if he failed, he still delayed his fall.
The sullen calm that long his bosom kept,
The storm that once had spent itself and slept,
Roused by events that seemed foredoomed to urge
His gloomy fortunes to their utmost verge,
Burst forth, and made him all he once had been,
And is again; he only changed the scene.

Light care had he for life, and less for fame,
But not less fitted for the desperate game:
He deemed himself marked out for other's hate,
And mocked at ruin so they shared his fate.
What cared he for the freedom of the crowd?
He raised the humble but to bend the proud.
He had hoped quiet in his sullen lair,
But man and destiny beset him there:
Inured to hunters he was found at bay,
And they must kill, they cannot snare the prey.
Stern, unambitious, silent, he had been
Henceforth a calm spectator of life's scene;
But dragged again upon the arena, stood
A leader not unequal to the feud;
In voice—mien—gesture—savage nature spoke,
And from his eye the gladiator broke.

X.

What boots the oft-repeated tale of strife,
The feast of vultures, and the waste of life?
The varying fortune of each separate field,
The fierce that vanquish, and the faint that yield?
The smoking ruin, and the crumbled wall?
In this the struggle was the same with all;
Save that distempered passions lent their force
In bitterness that banished all remorse.
None sued, for Mercy knew her cry was vain,
The captive died upon the battle-slain:
In either cause, one rage alone possest
The empire of the alternate victor's breast;
And they that smote for freedom or for sway,
Deemed few were slain, while more remained to slay.
It was too late to check the wasting brand,
And Desolation reaped the famished land;
The torch was lighted, and the flame was spread,
And Carnage smiled upon her daily dead.

XI.

Fresh with the nerve the new-born impulse strung,
The first success to Lara's numbers clung:
But that vain victory hath ruined all,
They form no longer to their leader's call;
In blind confusion on the foe they press,
And think to snatch is to secure success.
The lust of booty, and the thirst of hate,
Lure on the broken brigands to their fate;
In vain he doth whate'er a chief may do,
To check the headlong fury of that crew;
In vain their stubborn ardour he would tame,
The hand that kindles cannot quench the flame;
The wary foe alone hath turned their mood,
And shown their rashness to that erring brood:
The feigned retreat, the nightly ambuscade,
The daily harass, and the fight delayed,
The long privation of the hoped supply,
The tentless rest beneath the humid sky,

The stubborn wall that mocks the leaguer's art,
And palls the patience of his baffled heart,
Of these they had not deemed: the battle-day
They could encounter as a veteran may;
But more preferred the fury of the strife,
And present death to hourly suffering life:
And famine wrings, and fever sweeps away
His numbers melting fast from their array;
Intemperate triumph fades to discontent,
And Lara's soul alone seems still unbent:
But few remain to aid his voice and hand,
And thousands dwindled to a scanty band:
Desperate, though few, the last and best remained
To mourn the discipline they late disdained.
One hope survives, the frontier is not far,
And thence they may escape from native war;
And bear within them to the neighbouring state
An exile's sorrows, or an outlaw's hate:

Hard is the task their father land to quit,
But harder still to perish or submit.

XII.

It is resolved—they march—consenting Night
Guides with her star their dim and torchless flight;
Already they perceive its tranquil beam
Sleep on the surface of the barrier stream;
Already they descry—Is yon the bank?
Away! 'tis lined with many a hostile rank.
Return or fly!—What glitters in the rear?
'Tis Otho's banner—the pursuer's spear!
Are those the shepherds' fires upon the height?
Alas! they blaze too widely for the flight:
Cut off from hope, and compassed in the toil,
Less blood perchance hath bought a richer spoil!

XIII.

A moment's pause, 'tis but to breathe their band,
Or shall they onward press, or here withstand?
It matters little—if they charge the foes
Who by the border-stream their march oppose,
Some few, perchance, may break and pass the line,
However linked to baffle such design.
"The charge be ours! to wait for their assault
"Were fate well worthy of a coward's halt."
Forth flies each sabre, reined is every steed,
And the next word shall scarce outstrip the deed:
In the next tone of Lara's gathering breath
How many shall but hear the voice of death!

XIV.

His blade is bared, in him there is an air
As deep, but far too tranquil for despair;

A something of indifference more than then
Becomes the bravest, if they feel for men—
He turned his eye on Kaled, ever near,
And still too faithful to betray one fear;
Perchance 'twas but the moon's dim twilight threw
Along his aspect an unwonted hue
Of mournful paleness, whose deep tint exprest
The truth, and not the terror of his breast.
This Lara marked, and laid his hand on his:
It trembled not in such an hour as this;
His lip was silent, scarcely beat his heart,
His eye alone proclaimed, " We will not part!
" Thy band may perish, or thy friends may flee,
" Farewell to life, but not adieu to thee!"

The word hath passed his lips, and onward driven,
Pours the linked band through ranks asunder riven;
Well has each steed obeyed the armed heel,
And flash the scimitars, and rings the steel;

Outnumbered not outbraved, they still oppose
Despair to daring, and a front to foes;
And blood is mingled with the dashing stream,
Which runs all redly till the morning beam.

XV.

Commanding, aiding, animating all,
Where foe appeared to press, or friend to fall,
Cheers Lara's voice, and waves or strikes his steel,
Inspiring hope, himself had ceased to feel.
None fled, for well they knew that flight were vain;
But those that waver turn to smite again,
While yet they find the firmest of the foe
Recoil before their leader's look and blow:
Now girt with numbers, now almost alone,
He foils their ranks, or reunites his own;
Himself he spared not—once they seemed to fly—
Now was the time, he waved his hand on high,

And shook—why sudden droops that plumed crest?
The shaft is sped—the arrow's in his breast!
That fatal gesture left the unguarded side,
And Death hath stricken down yon arm of pride.
The word of triumph fainted from his tongue;
That hand, so raised, how droopingly it hung!
But yet the sword instinctively retains,
Though from its fellow shrink the falling reins;
These Kaled snatches: dizzy with the blow,
And senseless bending o'er his saddle-bow,
Perceives not Lara that his anxious page
Beguiles his charger from the combat's rage:
Meantime his followers charge, and charge again;
Too mixed the slayers now to heed the slain!

XVI.

Day glimmers on the dying and the dead,
The cloven cuirass, and the helmless head;

The war-horse masterless is on the earth,
And that last gasp hath burst his bloody girth;
And near yet quivering with what life remained,
The heel that urged him and the hand that reined;
And some too near that rolling torrent lie,
Whose waters mock the lip of those that die;
That panting thirst which scorches in the breath
Of those that die the soldier's fiery death,
In vain impels the burning mouth to crave
One drop—the last—to cool it for the grave;
With feeble and convulsive effort swept,
Their limbs along the crimsoned turf have crept;
The faint remains of life such struggles waste,
But yet they reach the stream, and bend to taste:
They feel its freshness, and almost partake—
Why pause? No further thirst have they to slake—
It is unquenched, and yet they feel it not;
It was an agony—but now forgot!

XVII.

Beneath a lime, remoter from the scene,
Where but for him that strife had never been,
A breathing but devoted warrior lay:
'Twas Lara bleeding fast from life away.
His follower once, and now his only guide,
Kneels Kaled watchful o'er his welling side,
And with his scarf would staunch the tides that rush,
With each convulsion, in a blacker gush;
And then, as his faint breathing waxes low,
In feebler, not less fatal tricklings flow:
He scarce can speak, but motions him 'tis vain,
And merely adds another throb to pain.
He clasps the hand that pang which would assuage,
And sadly smiles his thanks to that dark page
Who nothing fears, nor feels, nor heeds, nor sees,
Save that damp brow which rests upon his knees;
Save that pale aspect, where the eye, though dim,
Held all the light that shone on earth for him.

XVIII.

The foe arrives, who long had searched the field,
Their triumph nought till Lara too should yield;
They would remove him, but they see 'twere vain,
And he regards them with a calm disdain,
That rose to reconcile him with his fate,
And that escape to death from living hate:
And Otho comes, and leaping from his steed,
Looks on the bleeding foe that made him bleed,
And questions of his state; he answers not,
Scarce glances on him as on one forgot,
And turns to Kaled:—each remaining word,
They understood not, if distinctly heard;
His dying tones are in that other tongue,
To which some strange remembrance wildly clung.
They spake of other scenes, but what—is known
To Kaled, whom their meaning reached alone;
And he replied, though faintly, to their sound,
While gazed the rest in dumb amazement round:

They seemed even then—that twain—unto the last
To half forget the present in the past;
To share between themselves some separate fate,
Whose darkness none beside should penetrate. 1098

XIX.

Their words though faint were many—from the tone
Their import those who heard could judge alone;
From this, you might have deemed young Kaled's death
More near than Lara's by his voice and breath,
So sad, so deep, and hesitating broke
The accents his scarce-moving pale lips spoke;
But Lara's voice though low, at first was clear
And calm, till murmuring death gasped hoarsely near:
But from his visage little could we guess,
So unrepentant, dark, and passionless,

Save that when struggling nearer to his last,
Upon that page his eye was kindly cast;
And once as Kaled's answering accents ceast,
Rose Lara's hand, and pointed to the East:
Whether (as then the breaking sun from high
Rolled back the clouds) the morrow caught his eye,
Or that 'twas chance, or some remembered scene
That raised his arm to point where such had been,
Scarce Kaled seemed to know, but turned away,
As if his heart abhorred that coming day.
And shrunk his glance before that morning light,
To look on Lara's brow—where all grew night.
Yet sense seemed left, though better were its loss;
For when one near displayed the absolving cross,
And proffered to his touch the holy bead,
Of which his parting soul might own the need,
He looked upon it with an eye profane,
And smiled—Heaven pardon! if 'twere with disdain:

And Kaled, though he spoke not, nor withdrew
From Lara's face his fixed despairing view,
With brow repulsive, and with gesture swift,
Flung back the hand which held the sacred gift,
As if such but disturbed the expiring man,
Nor seemed to know his life but *then* began,
That life of Immortality, secure
To none, save them whose faith in Christ is sure.

XX.

But gasping heaved the breath that Lara drew,
And dull the film along his dim eye grew;
His limbs stretched fluttering, and his head drooped
o'er
The weak yet still untiring knee that bore;
He pressed the hand he held upon his heart—
It beats no more, but Kaled will not part
With the cold grasp, but feels, and feels in vain,
For that faint throb which answers not again.

"It beats!"—Away, thou dreamer! he is gone—
It once was Lara which thou look'st upon.

XXI.

He gazed, as if not yet had passed away
The haughty spirit of that humble clay;
And those around have roused him from his trance,
But cannot tear from thence his fixed glance;
And when in raising him from where he bore
Within his arms the form that felt no more,
He saw the head his breast would still sustain,
Roll down like earth to earth upon the plain;
He did not dash himself thereby, nor tear
The glossy tendrils of his raven hair,
But strove to stand and gaze, but reeled and fell,
Scarce breathing more than that he loved so well.
Than that *he* loved! Oh! never yet beneath
The breast of man such trusty love may breathe!

That trying moment hath at once revealed
The secret long and yet but half-concealed;
In baring to revive that lifeless breast,
Its grief seemed ended, but the sex confest;
And life returned, and Kaled felt no shame—
What now to her was Womanhood or Fame?

XXII.

And Lara sleeps not where his fathers sleep,
But where he died his grave was dug as deep
Nor is his mortal slumber less profound,
Though priest nor blessed, nor marble decked the mound;
And he was mourned by one whose quiet grief,
Less loud, outlasts a people's for their chief.
Vain was all question asked her of the past,
And vain e'en menace—silent to the last;
She told nor whence, nor why she left behind
Her all for one who seemed but little kind.

Why did she love him? Curious fool!—be still—
Is human love the growth of human will?
To her he might be gentleness; the stern
Have deeper thoughts than your dull eyes discern,
And when they love, your smilers guess not how
Beats the strong heart, though less the lips avow.
They were not common links, that formed the chain
That bound to Lara Kaled's heart and brain;
But that wild tale she brooked not to unfold,
And sealed is now each lip that could have told.

XXIII.

They laid him in the earth, and on his breast,
Besides the wound that sent his soul to rest,
They found the scattered dints of many a scar,
Which were not planted there in recent war;
Where'er had passed his summer years of life,
It seems they vanished in a land of strife;

But all unknown his glory or his guilt,
These only told that somewhere blood was spilt,
And Ezzelin, who might have spoke the past,
Returned no more—that night appeared his last.

XXIV.

Upon that night (a peasant's is the tale)
A Serf that crossed the intervening vale,
When Cynthia's light almost gave way to morn,
And nearly veiled in mist her waning horn;
A Serf, that rose betimes to thread the wood, 1199
And hew the bough that bought his children's food,
Passed by the river that divides the plain
Of Otho's lands and Lara's broad domain:
He heard a tramp—a horse and horseman broke
From out the wood—before him was a cloak
Wrapt round some burthen at his saddle-bow,
Bent was his head, and hidden was his brow.

Roused by the sudden sight at suc
And some foreboding that it mig
Himself unheeded watched the
Who reached the river, bounded f
And lifting thence the burthen
Heaved up the bank, and dashe
Then paused, and looked, and tu
watch,
And still another hurried glance
And follow with his step the st
As if even yet too much its sur
At once he started, stooped, ar
The winter floods had scatter
Of these the heaviest thence h
And slung them with a more
Meantime the Serf had crept to
Himself might safely mark what
He caught a glimpse, as of a flo
And something glittered star

ould mark the buoyant trunk,
smote it, and it sunk:
istinct to view,
of a purple hue,
eared: the horseman gazed
t eddy it had raised;
ed on his pawing steed,
him into panting speed.
d—the features of the dead,
ped the observer's dread;
its bosom bore,
t knighthood ever wore,
ir Ezzelin had worn
l to such a morn.
eaven receive his soul!
bs to ocean roll;
ne hope would dwell
and by which he fell.

XXV.

And Kaled—Lara—Ezzelin, are gone,
Alike without their monumental stone!
The first, all efforts vainly strove to wean
From lingering where her chieftain's blood had been;
Grief had so tamed a spirit once too proud,
Her tears were few, her wailing never loud;
But furious would you tear her from the spot
Where yet she scarce believed that he was not,
Her eye shot forth with all the living fire
That haunts the tigress in her whelpless ire;
But left to waste her weary moments there,
She talked all idly unto shapes of air,
Such as the busy brain of Sorrow paints,
And woos to listen to her fond complaints:
And she would sit beneath the very tree
Where lay his drooping head upon her knee;
And in that posture where she saw him fall,
His words, his looks, his dying grasp recall;

And she had shorn, but saved her raven hair,
And oft would snatch it from her bosom there,
And fold, and press it gently to the ground,
As if she staunched anew some phantom's wound.
Herself would question, and for him reply;
Then rising, start, and beckon him to fly
From some imagined spectre in pursuit;
Then seat her down upon some linden's root,
And hide her visage with her meagre hand,
Or trace strange characters along the sand—
This could not last—she lies by him she loved;
Her tale untold—her truth too dearly proved.

THE event in section 24, Canto [illegible]d, was suggested by the description of the death or rather burial of the Duke of Gandia.

The most interesting and particular account of this mysterious event, is given by Burchard; and is in substance as follows: "On the eighth day of June, the cardinal of Valenza, and the duke of Gandia, sons of the pope, supped "with their mother, Vanozza, near the church of *S. Pietro ad* "*vincula*; several other persons being present at the entertainment. A late hour approaching, and the cardinal "having reminded his brother, that it was time to return "to the apostolic palace, they mounted their horses or mules, "with only a few attendants, and proceeded together as far "as the palace of cardinal Ascanio Sforza, when the duke "informed the cardinal, that before he returned home, he "had to pay a visit of pleasure. Dismissing therefore all "his attendants, excepting his *staffiero*, or footman, and a "person in a mask, who had paid him a visit whilst at supper, and who, during the space of a month, or thereabouts, "previous to this time, had called upon him almost daily, "at the apostolic palace, he took this person behind him on "his mule, and proceeded to the street of the Jews, where "he quitted his servant, directing him to remain there until

" a certain hour; when, if he did not return, he might repair
" to the palace. The duke then seated the person in the
" mask behind him, and rode, I know not whither; but in
" that night he was assassinated, and thrown into the river.
" The servant, after having been dismissed, was also as-
" saulted and mortally wounded; and although he was at-
" tended with great care, yet such was his situation, that he
" could give no intelligible account of what had befallen his
" master. In the morning, the duke not having returned to
" the palace, his servants began to be alarmed; and one of
" them informed the pontiff of the evening excursion of his
" sons, and that the duke had not yet made his appearance.
" This gave the pope no small anxiety; but he conjectured
" that the duke had been attracted by some courtesan to pass
" the night with her, and not choosing to quit the house in
" open day, had waited till the following evening to return
" home. When, however, the evening arrived, and he found
" himself disappointed in his expectations, he became deeply
" afflicted, and began to make inquiries from different per-
" sons, whom he ordered to attend him for that purpose.
" Amongst these was a man named Giorgio Schiavoni, who,
" having discharged some timber from a bark in the river,
" had remained on board the vessel to watch it, and being
" interrogated whether he had seen any one thrown into the
" river, on the night preceding, he replied, that he saw two
" men on foot, who came down the street, and looked dili-

"gently about, to observe, whether any person was passing. "That seeing no one, they returned, and a short time after- "wards two others came, and looked around in the same "manner as the former; no person still appearing, they gave "a sign to their companions, when a man came, mounted "on a white horse, having behind him a dead body, the head "and arms of which hung on one side, and the feet on the "other side of the horse; the two persons on foot supporting "the body, to prevent its falling. They thus proceeded "towards that part, where the filth of the city is usually dis- "charged into the river, and turning the horse with his tail "towards the water, the two persons took the dead body by "the arms and feet, and with all their strength flung it into "the river. The person on horseback then asked if they "had thrown it in, to which they replied, *Signor, si.* (yes, Sir.) "He then looked towards the river, and seeing a mantle "floating on the stream, he inquired what it was that ap- "peared black, to which they answered, it was a mantle; and one of them threw stones upon it, in consequence of which it sunk. The attendants of the pontiff then inquired from Giorgio, why he had not revealed this to the gover- nor of the city; to which he replied, that he had seen in ...'s time a hundred dead bodies thrown into the river at ...e same place, without any inquiry being made respect- ... them, and that he had not, therefore, considered it as ...atter of any importance. The fishermen and seamen

" were then collected and ordered to search the river, where, " on the following evening, they found the body of the duke, " with his habit entire, and thirty ducats in his purse. He " was pierced with nine wound one of which was in his " throat, the others in his head, bo and limbs. No sooner " was the pontiff informed of the death of his son, and that " he had been thrown, like filth, into the river, than giving " way to his grief, he shut himself up in a chamber, and " wept bitterly. The cardinal of Segovia, and other at- " tendants on the pope, went to the door, and after many " hours spent in persuasions and exhortations, prevailed " upon him to admit them. From the evening of Wednesday " till the following Saturday, the pope took no food; nor dic " he sleep from Thursday morning till the same hour on th " ensuing day. At length, however, giving way to the ir " treaties of his attendants, he began to restrain his sorrow " and to consider the injury which his own health migh " sustain, by the further indulgence of his grief."—*Roscoe Leo Tenth, Vol.* I. *page* 265.

END OF VOL. III.